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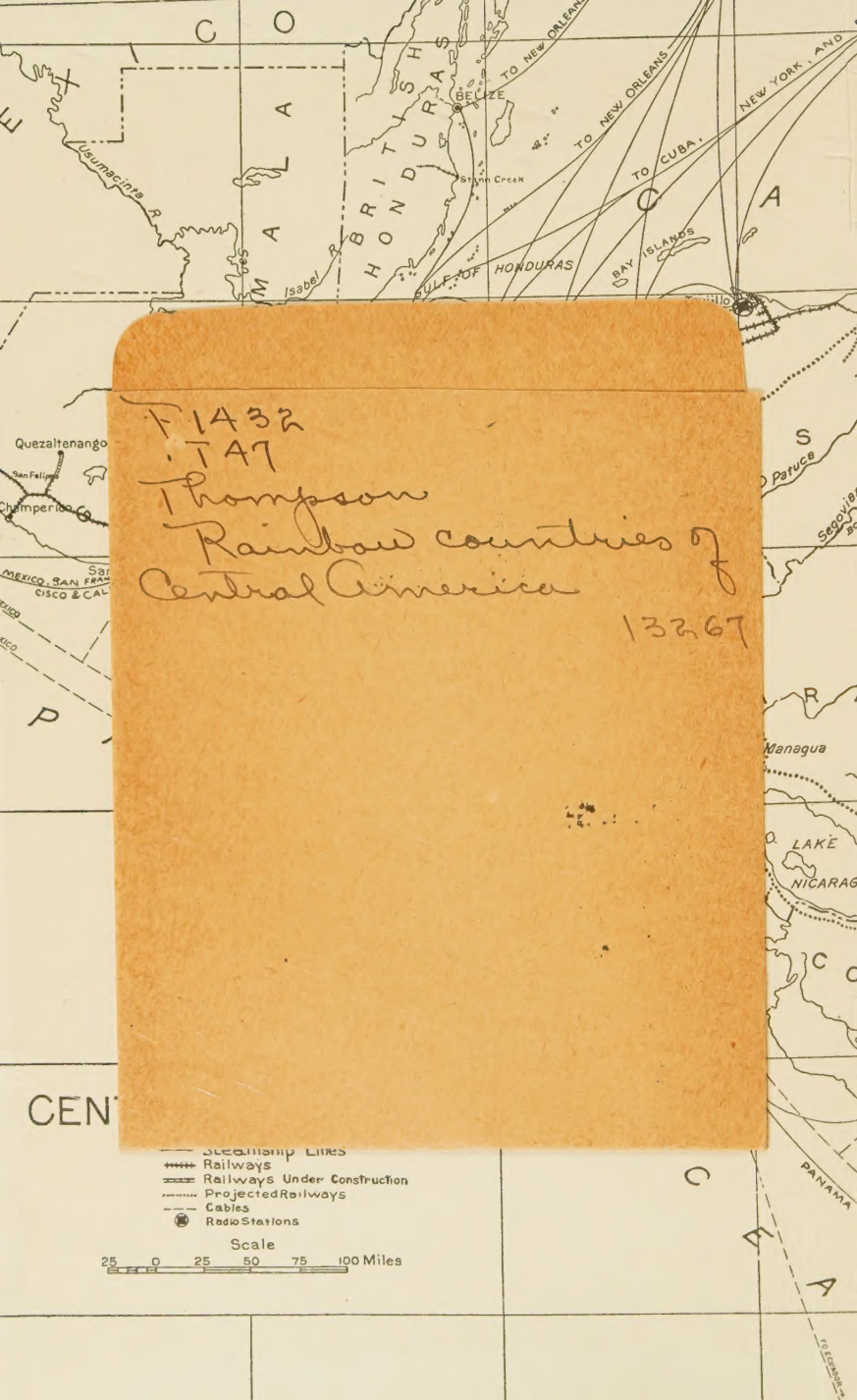
RAINBOW COUNTRIES OF CENTRAL AMERICA

WALLACE THOMPSON



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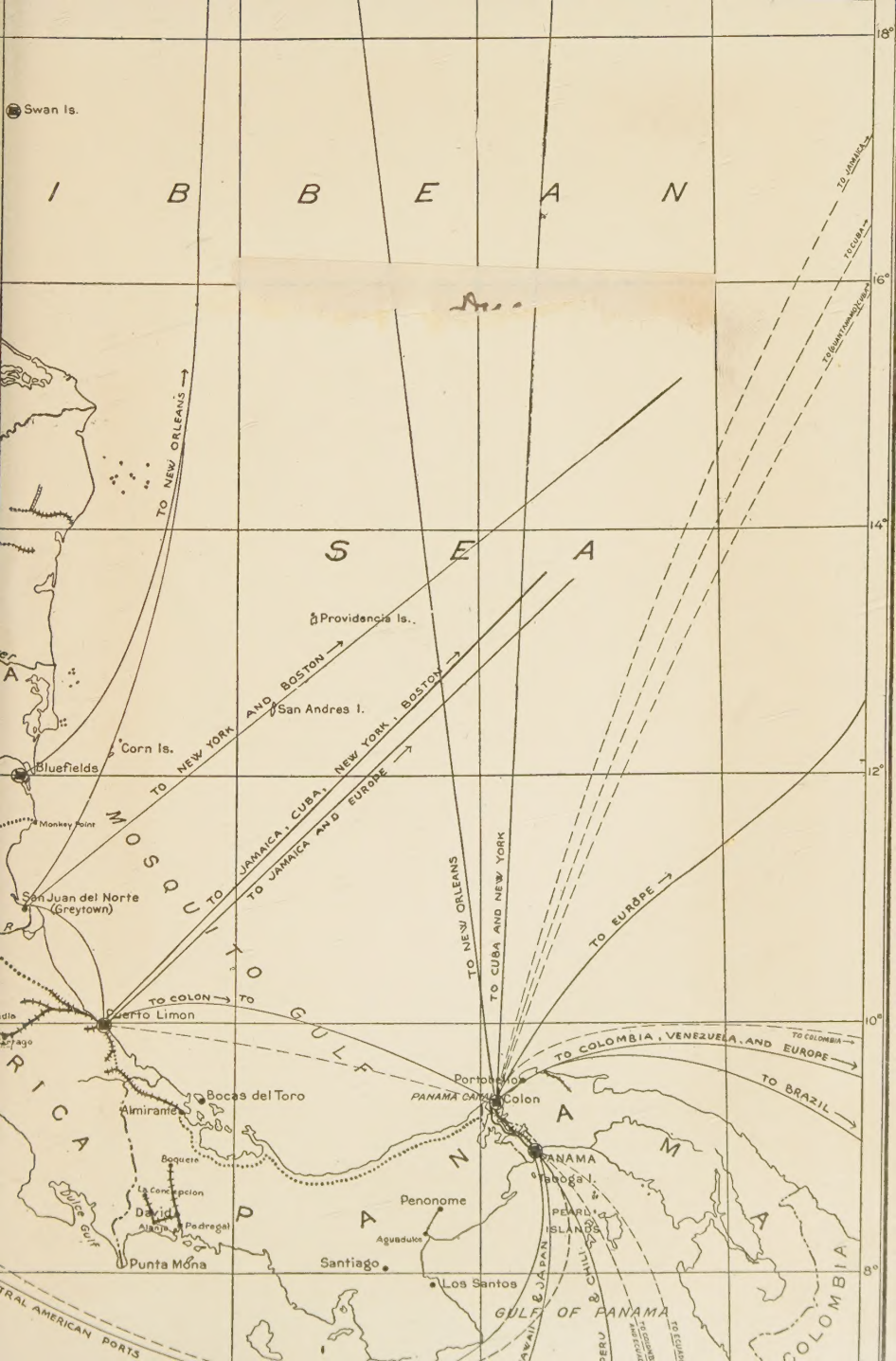
Swan Is.
I B B E A N
TO JAMAICA
TO CUBA
TO NEW ORLEANS
S E A
Providencia Is.
San Andres I.
Corn Is.
Bluefields
Monkey Point
TO NEW YORK AND BOSTON
TO JAMAICA, CUBA, NEW YORK, BOSTON
TO JAMAICA AND EUROPE
MOSQUITO GULF
San Juan del Norte (Greytown)
TO NEW ORLEANS
TO CUBA AND NEW YORK
TO EUROPE
TO COLON
Puerto Limon
TO COLOMBIA
TO COLOMBIA, VENEZUELA, AND EUROPE
TO BRAZIL
Portobello
PANAMA CANAL
Colon
Bocas del Toro
Almirante
PANAMA
Taboga I.
Boquete
La Concepcion
Penonome
PEARL ISLANDS
David
Alanje
Padregal
Aguadulce
Punta Mona
Santiago
Los Santos
GULF OF PANAMA
COLOMBIA
18°
16°
14°
12°
10°
8°

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RAINBOW COUNTRIES OF CENTRAL AMERICA

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The solitary sentinel of Mayan civilization. This *Stela* at Quiriguá, Guatemala, is one of the most beautiful aboriginal sculptures in America.

RAINBOW COUNTRIES OF CENTRAL AMERICA

BY

WALLACE THOMPSON, F.R.G.S.

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AUTHOR OF "THE PEOPLE OF MEXICO," ETC.

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PREFACE

FEW travelers find their way to the rainbow countries of Central America. Few books have been written about them. Yet they are the most accessible, in time and comfort, of all the unspoiled lands of the world. They are, too, countries where destiny, today, sits on national doorsteps, while tomorrow seems sure to see them not only the goal of tourists, but also centres of new and startling political and commercial development. They have outgrown in slow yet charming years the era of Spanish colonial ease and wealth, and have forgotten, but for superb monuments hidden in their jungles, the time when one of the greatest Indian empires and cultures of old time thrived there.

The Indian life of native village and modern plantation, and the heritages of mediæval Spain that survive everywhere, form a background of strange scenes and colorful customs as fascinating as anything in Cambodia or Perú. Along the highways that time and race have set for them, the Central American countries are making the long, painful trek toward democracy and economic independence. Nationally and individually they are gentle and very wise; but at the same

moment, almost, they are fierce and heedlessly destructive. Hindered and supported, equally, by their own qualities and by the often mistaken helpfulness of others, they are writing, today, one of the most human documents of contemporary history, upon those pages of magnificent past and boundless future.

In these facts alone lies my excuse for writing this book. Behind my writing, however, has been a realization that time and history are pressing on the world's appreciation of Central America, as on a larger scale of all Latin America. In a way the situation is not uncomparable to that great moment of British history when Victoria's kingdom awoke from its long dream of "little England" into the vision of the Empire. In those days, in the late 'seventies and early 'eighties, there was a hungering for descriptions and prophecies of that newer England, that greater Britain. To fill that need came books which have become immortal documents of history, where Dilke and Froude and Seeley voiced their calls to England in terms which neither yellowing paper nor fading ink can erase or silence.

Today no book can fill for Central America the rôle of these great heralds, for that time is gone—or perhaps is not yet come again. But may one not play a rôle of one's own, the rôle of him who dances in cap and bells before the royal procession, or sounds the first shrill, uncertain note upon the bugle of the awakening that must come, in a year, or a decade or in half a century?

But let us be on our way. I have written here a book half travel-tale and half exposition of history, sociology and economics, and of the gleaming future. I have written it so, first as an invitation and companion to the journey, and second because I have always felt that if history and life were interesting at all, a book written about them could be just as pleasant if true and even substantial things were set down, as if its pages were confined only to the froth. I have tried here, then, to do what some one must some day do with the travel book; merge happily between its covers both the color and charm of the lands he tells of, and those relatively few dependable facts that the reader has a perfectly honest right to want to know, and the availability of which, as he reads, are vital to his full enjoyment and understanding.

I shall not here attempt to make a bibliography, for most of it would carry us into the realm of the antiquary, so few are the reliable modern works on Central America. The definitive study of political conditions and history is "The Five Republics of Central America," written in 1916 by Dr. Dana C. Munro. The Pan American Union in Washington issues illustrated descriptive booklets on all the countries; these are sent for five cents in America and seven cents elsewhere. As for a real guidebook, there is none; but, for data on travel routes and accommodations and costs, the indispensable work is "The Commercial Traveler's Guide to Latin America," published by the Department of Com-

merce of the United States. It is sent by the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., for $1.25 in America and $1.55 elsewhere.

In the work of preparing this book I owe much to the Pan American Union in Washington, to the interested help of friends in the United States Department of State, and to the American officials resident in the five countries. And, although I cannot list them one by one, a host of old and new friends amongst the Central Americans, from the greatest of them to the least. They have contributed to my pages in places which they will recognize and where they will know my friendly thanks, and that I remember the happy hours I spent with them.

WALLACE THOMPSON

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RAINBOW COUNTRIES OF CENTRAL AMERICA

RAINBOW COUNTRIES OF CENTRAL AMERICA

CHAPTER I

TRADE WINDS, PIRATES AND GEOGRAPHY

THE trade winds that blow eternally from the shores of Europe to the Americas would carry us today, as they carried Columbus, southward as well as westward to the islands and the broad breast of the Caribbean Sea. They would drive a windjammer from Boston, as they drove the Spanish galleons and the fleet of Sir Francis Drake and the pirate ships of Henry Morgan, swiftly down through the Antilles, and, turning her prow sharply to the sunset, would sweep her on until her keel scraped on the golden sands of the Spanish Main.

For the Spanish Main of history and legend was the name, not of the Caribbean Sea (as most of us thought in our pirate-reading days) nor of its islands. The Spanish Main, as would properly be, was the wide circlet of mainland that curved from Yucatan on the north,

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southward along the edge of Central America, Panamá, Colombia, Venezuela and the Guianas, to the mouth of the Amazon.

There is no more storied region in all the world than these romantic shores. The histories of México and of Perú are more stained with blood and more practical with their tales of treasure. Cuba and Haiti intrigue us more, with the uncertainties of their staccato history. The life of the continents to the south as well as to the north of the Caribbean swings with a more conventional majesty. But the swashbuckling tales of Spanish conquerors and English and French pirates have made a setting for the Spanish Main that we may have to go back to youth to remember, but which gives us a mental grip that is firmer than most of us can find in all our solemn knowledge of more peaceful lands. Drake, Morgan, Pierre le Grand, Long John Silver and Captain Kidd lead a procession we can gladly join to march forward to a more intimate appreciation and a yet more mature judgment of the wonderful countries that were the background of their thrilling adventures.

Of all the Spanish Main, Central America lived in that historic past and retains in its life today, more of the romance and more of the intense individuality of Spanish colonist and pirate trader than any of its neighbors. The provinces of northern South America furnished their emeralds and their placer gold, and tempted even Sir Walter Raleigh to seek in their wildernesses for the treasure house of *El Dorado*, the Gilded King.

Central America had little gold, and no tempting legends of hidden treasure or rich Indian empires in its mountain fastnesses. But it had a rare location in the colonial world, as the goal of the trade winds and as the virtual centre of the whole vast Spanish empire.

Through all its early history, Central America was in many ways the pivotal point of Spanish administration. To its shores came, before they touched elsewhere, the galleons from Spain, with the freight and supplies, whether destined for México in the North or for Buenos Aires in the far South. No more important section of the world existed, in the eyes of Spain, than these very shores whose present we seek gingerly to explain and of whose future we still talk in terms of possibilities!

Central America's proximity to Panamá was then, as now, its first passport to interest. For then, as now, the treasures of the world passed across Panamá. From Perú and from Manila they came in great ships to the Pacific shore, and on mule-back over the narrow trails passed to other waiting galleons on the Atlantic. Well, indeed, might Spaniard and British pirate regard with attention lands where such significant things happened as the transshipment of the treasure of the Incas!

An even deeper reason than accessibility for Central America's development in just the lines it followed was also deep-rooted in that early period. Its lack of great mineral wealth of its own, combined with the importance of its administrative organization for the handling of the treasure that poured through its territories, left

all this region fertile ground for the implanting of the greatest benefits that Spain had to give to its colonies.

Central America (called the Captain-Generalcy of Guatemala then), perhaps more than any other province, received the benefit of Spain's system of civil administration and its practical education in religion, letters and municipal life. And, besides, with only administrative work to be done, Spain sent to Central America a different type of colonist—farmers and clerks, and many of gentle blood. Central America, amongst the colonies of Spain in the Western Hemisphere, gained more from those 300 years, both in intellectual heritage, and in blood, for that matter, than perhaps any of the others; surely it lost nothing, as México and Perú, for example, may be said to have lost so much of their inheritance from Aztec and Inca civilizations.

The Spanish influence on Central American history is none the less overwhelming. Central America is no younger child of Spain. No less a personage than Christopher Columbus himself discovered Honduras in 1502, sailed south along the Mosquito coast of Nicaragua (where he was not impressed by any friendliness in the Indians), and reached, finally, to the land that he called Costa Rica (literally "Rich Shore"). There, for the first time on this voyage, the Spaniards found gold—in the ornaments worn by the natives. Those beautifully wrought ornaments of Costa Rica are rare

archeological treasures today, and, as Columbus himself later learned, they were treasures to the Indians then, for gold was no common metal there. But the sign was enough for the Spaniards, and the short-lived settlement of Costa Rica, headed by Bartholomew Columbus, was one of the first on the mainland of the continent.

But in that very time there was passing away in the north, in what is now Guatemala, one of the greatest barbaric civilizations which history has ever seen, that of the Mayas, a wealth and a civilization of which the Spaniards were as yet entirely ignorant. Superb cities, built of stone elaborately wrought, with a literature even today only partially deciphered, a science in many ways more accurate and advanced than that of the Europe of that time, and a social organization which the governments that have followed under Spain and the independence have hardly excelled,—these were the characteristics of the great history which preceded the Spaniards.

The conquest of these Central American Indians by the Spaniards came nearly two decades later. Although little known, in comparison with the conquests of México and Perú as immortalized by Prescott's vivid narratives, it lacks none of the heroism, or the cruelty, or the bigotry, of those larger canvases. The march of Pedro de Alvarado's army, overland from México into Guatemala through jungles that are utterly trackless to this day, is another of the striking stories of super-

human endurance that mark the whole history of Spain in America.

The battles whose scenes we shall visit in the highlands of Guatemala have a legendary glory awful in its horror and superb in its daring, while the hazy tales of ruthless and easy conquest of tribes other than the Mayas and their highland allies, are virtually hidden in the as yet unscratched archæology of these countries, yet for that matter, neither the one nor the other seems less lost in dim tradition than are the events of the Spanish rule that followed in succeeding centuries.

Indeed, the background of the Central America of today sometimes seems like a dim romantic panorama, of prehistoric civilizations, rivalling Egypt and India, of Spanish conquerors running rivers red with the blood of Indian armies, of pirates treading the "Main" with dripping swords and leathern sacks of yellow gold, and, in more modern days, of chivalrous revolutions and burning idealisms, of slavery and the wealth of coffee, of colorful dictatorships and the golden trove of the banana trade. It is all part and parcel of a past of isolation in the very midst of the world. For three centuries Spain held the world at bay, and then for an even hundred years revolutions, politics and diplomacy have shut Central America away not only from Europe and Asia but from the United States as well.

Now, those four centuries and all they stood for are gone. With Panamá become the great crossroads of the world and with the United States' policy toward Latin

America emerged into the highway of world diplomacy, Central America is awakening to dazzling political and commercial potentialities. The suddenness of this arrival may well startle a world busy with its own patchwork past, for it has surprised the people of the very countries of Central America themselves, dozing, still, amid their memories and their dreams.

And to what do they, and we, awaken? What is this Central America, where and how connected and how rich and in what?

In explaining, and in answering, the geography of Central America is more illuminating, even, than its history. Central America is made up of five tiny nations, dovetailed into one another like baroche pearls on a string. México is the northern boundary, Panamá the southern, so that Central America lies between the ninth and fifteenth parallels of north latitude, stretching six hundred miles only between México and Panamá. Thus all the five countries are wholly within the tropics, all north of South America and south of Cuba and even Jamaica, and south, too, of most of the Philippine Islands.

In general the axis of Central America runs off from northwest to southeast, so that the most westerly point is nearly south of Galveston and the easternmost directly south of eastern Florida. So, strung on their slanting line from México to Panamá are the five countries; Guatemala, richest of all, at the north, then Honduras and Salvador (the latter, smallest but most thickly

populated, tucked in on the Pacific side in a corner formed by Guatemala and Honduras), next Nicaragua, largest in size, and last Costa Rica with Panamá adjoining it on the south.

Although six hundred miles long, Central America is only from seventy-five to 250 miles wide, so that every point in the whole rich expanse of its territory is within a few hours, by rail or motor car, or a few days, by ox-cart or mule, from the sea and the ships and the ports of all the world. The backbone of the five countries is a comparatively low cordillera, 6,000-foot mountains with rich slopes for coffee farms. Toward the Atlantic side, down to the Caribbean Sea, are broad, low jungle valleys, rich for banana farms and for pastures, and on the Pacific side a comparatively narrow ledge, half desert and half a most luxurious garden, the site of the chief cities and of the richest of the coffee and sugar farms.

It is toward these lands and toward their promise that we now set sail. For across seas actual as well as symbolic the traveler must go to Central America. If we are inured to the discomforts of tropical railway travel, or if we find the sea sufficiently distasteful, we might go by rail all the way from New York to Guatemala City, passing through México, with many inconveniences and no great advantage in time.

By water we go in dapper banana boats to Puerto Barrios in northern Guatemala from New Orleans (only seventy-two hours away) or from New York or Boston.

To northern Honduras we can go direct, by fruit vessels too, from New York and New Orleans. Northern Nicaragua is also reached by fruit boats, but they are irregular freighters, little interested in passenger traffic. To southern Nicaragua (the Pacific side and the most developed section) we should go on the Pacific Mail or Panama-Pacific liners that pass between New York and San Francisco via the canal. These fine big ships also are the direct means of reaching Salvador, which lies wholly on the Pacific, and some of them also touch southern Honduras. Costa Rica we may reach either via the canal port of Panamá (Balboa) and a coasting ship to the Pacific port of Puntarenas, or by the boats of the United Fruit Company direct from New York, New Orleans or Boston, or from the northern terminus of the canal to Port Limon on the Caribbean. From Europe, if the traveler would go direct, there are Elders & Fyffe boats to northern Costa Rica, and excellent French, Norwegian and German as well as these English boats, to the canal.

And just here a word may not be amiss as to the preparations for a journey through Central America. Life there is very much like life anywhere else, but there are a few points in which the traveler from abroad will find adaptation necessary. Primarily these are due to the fact that the Central American, although his home is a model of comfort, does not, in his traveling, enjoy the luxuries which have come to seem necessities in travel elsewhere. The trains are not always equipped

with parlor cars, and where they are not, it is very well indeed to be prepared, for instance, with such things as paper towels and paper napkins—one can wash but not wipe, and one can eat delicious things luxuriously with a jacknife and fingers off a banana leaf, but a napkin of any kind is likely to be unobtainable. A thermos bottle, or, for the sake of space and weight, a plain aluminum canteen, for carrying plain, cold water will be more welcome than you can guess, for you get very tired indeed of charged water and "soft drinks."

As to clothes, the keynote is that the travel is in the tropics, even while the formalities are of the great world. You will need tropical clothing; palm beach or mohair suits are indispensable, and "whites" if you care to take so much baggage, will be a great comfort. Carry a hard straw hat—"panamas" are worn, but no more so than in New York or London. Riding clothes, of course, and they will be convenient, and quite the proper thing, for traveling by train or motor as well as horseback. A bathing suit and a light bathrobe should be taken.

The woman traveler needs only to know that laundry, while quick and cheap, is not very efficient and is likely to damage finer fabrics, and also (and this affects, too, the man's choice of tropical clothing) there are no good dry cleaning establishments in Central America. The woman traveler must, on the other hand, realize that she will be the happier and indeed comfortable

only if she has clothes for every occasion, with almost the demands of a summer resort at home. Indeed, in spite of the fact that Central America lies in the tropics, three of the capitals enjoy an almost temperate zone climate in the mountains, and in addition, in all of them, all official gatherings and formal affairs call for proper dress, and men as well as women should provide accordingly.

A man's wardrobe should include at least a dinner coat, and frock for formal day affairs. A silk hat will be needed if he is on an official government mission; otherwise a hard straw or felt hat will usually be understood, if not approved, at formal affairs. Such hats can, of course, be bought in Central America, but as a general thing, it will be well not to count on being able to purchase needed clothing accessories or toilet articles on the journey; toilet supplies can, of course, be bought, but you can easily carry a sufficient supply of your favorite brands.

Kodak films of the usual sizes can be purchased if necessary in most of the capitals, but it will be best to carry your full stock for the journey, in the special tins that can be obtained, on request, for tropical travel. After exposure, films should not be re-sealed, as they are likely to "sweat." Local photographers are prone to use old and dirty developer so that unless one does one's own developing en route, the percentage is in favor of keeping all films until the trip is over, or, better, shipping them home by mail, as soon as exposed.

In doing the latter, they should go registered but unsealed, plainly marked as "Exposed Camera films of American (or British) manufacture," thus avoiding delays in custom-houses.

So now, properly equipped and prepared for all sorts of hardships which we shall never encounter, the journey to the rainbow countries can well begin. As to a start,—we naturally begin at one end, and so travel the five countries one after the other, to see and know their charming individualities as well as their rare unities. We can begin either at Guatemala, seventy-two hours by sea from New Orleans, or at Costa Rica, at the edge of Panamá.

Panamá is not included in Central America, either geographically, politically or commercially. It was formerly a part of the South American Republic of Colombia. Its commercial problems are now those of the canal, and even geographically Panamá marks the end, rather than a part of the Central American division. Yet because Panamá is the convenient cross-roads that it is, and because, too, of the presence of the canal, it is wisest to begin our journey from Panamá. The great canal should be seen, if for the fiftieth time, on the verge of any trip into tropical America, for in that vast work we have visible proof that man can conquer, as he has conquered there, his eternal enemy, the jungle. It is well to carry that picture as we start for lands where that age-long battle of the tropics seems often just begun.

Panamá, at whichever end of the canal, is comfortable, soothing and amusing. From its great concrete docks we can take boat with ease and the assurance that Costa Rica is only overnight away, and so go to rest in comfort and anticipation. The start is best made from Cristobal (or Colón—they are the same) at the northern, or Caribbean, end of the canal, the destination Port Limón, Costa Rica, where we take train for the journey across Costa Rica, via its capital, to the Pacific. On the Pacific, at Puntarenas, we shall start on our journey up the coast to the other four countries, which are still as a group, reached best from the Pacific side.

The boat we take from Colón will probably be one of those of the United Fruit Company, which virtually monopolizes the coastal traffic on the Caribbean. And where the United Fruit boats go, there is dependable service, made possible and guaranteed, now, by the banana trade. Thus the boats in this service are comfortable and swift out of all proportion to the as yet undeveloped tourist traffic to these ports.

But let us go aboard, to linger a moment to look out again over the glaring miracle of Panamá, and then to turn our backs and look out, beyond, at the sea, keen-eyed and eager for the color and the fresh promised charm of the rainbow countries.

CHAPTER II

COSTA RICA—RED EARTH

WESTWARD from Panamá our steamer ploughs the Caribbean toward the rainbow countries. The white completeness of the Canal Zone fades behind, and with it the lonely, unaccented coast of the Panamá Republic. The Mosquito Gulf lifts us on its dark blue bosom with the uncertain, always threatening swell of the waters of the "Spanish Main." For we sail this sea, flecked with romance and mystery, toward regions that are still as wonderful and new as when Drake first came to try the prowess of his tiny ships against the might of sea and Spain.

This romance and mystery we shall not lose. With the morning we touch its outer rim, the purpled edge of the rainbow's crimson—in the solid, good red earth of Costa Rica. Dawn finds us at Port Limón, and about us a long, even coast, accented now with level forests that look like overgrown maize fields or a vast nursery of that aristocrat of the garden, the canna. And so it is the canna—a noble relative of the canna family—the banana of Costa Rica. Down to the very water's edge the groves seem to come, and only a suggestion of

palm and tropical forest rises above and behind them.

Now, wherever there are bananas, somewhere in the hot quiet about them is civilization—in Central America. Port Limón is an excellent type of civilization, for it is a well-built port, and looks not at all forbidding as a town, merely a not too much modernized blotch of human-ness in the green of the jungle and banana groves. It welcomes us with its busy and efficient pier and after the Costa Rican doctor has come aboard our ship draws up alongside—a noble miracle of seamanship without a tug and with a single-screw steamer!

On the dock is a motley array of citizens of many lands—chiefly West Indian negroes, although there are a few Costa Ricans and a smaller company of American fruit company officials. A large, very dusky lady, gaudy in green satin, and smoking of the immortal "whopping big cheroot," is selling native candies. Longshoremen in various stages of decrepitude and racial mixture swarm about a small fleet of diminutive railway flat cars on which they will "handle" our baggage after it is lifted off the ship by the steam crane. Down on the wharf, waiting for our ship's company of tourists "doing" Central America, is their shiny special train of tempting-looking parlor cars. We ourselves are taking our trunks for more than the two days' stay of the tourists, so we shall have to wait for the regular train—the custom-house formalities are waived only for hand-bags.

The tourists are early off on the special train; we

watch them pull out while we stand in the growing morning heat of the unshaded pier. We take our way afoot to the custom-house, where we find courtesy, silence (they look on us as some form of dumb creature, just as New Yorkers look on foreigners wearing immigration-station tags) and enough dispatch for all practical purposes. The examination is perfunctory; the only charge is one cent a kilogram for the port dues, and seldom anything of duty. The negro youth with whom we contracted to handle our baggage has already let it out to a sad-visaged Costa Rican, and between both of them buying our tickets and checking our trunks a half hour is gone. The cost of each ticket (exchange varies) is about $2 U. S. Cy. (for a day's ride!) but the excess we pay on 150 pounds of baggage is twice that $2—for so the system goes in all Latin America.

And now we have a soul-disciplining wait in Port Limón. There is no parlor car—they are all being used on the trippers' special. We have seats parked out in the first-class coach, with a porter on guard to shoo off trespassers, so we go to see the town. There is not so much of that—a lovely park, a bit of sea wall and a glimpse of verdant coast. The shaded street shown in all the books is there—but it is the only shaded street in town, and it is one block long! We are back soon to our seats in the railway car, and to the more potent joys of anticipation, for Port Limón is a banana port when all is said and done. The real Costa Rica is only sifting in on us, all the beautiful, vivid, proud Costa Rica that

lies beyond the jungle, and beyond the hills, far up in the mountains.

Port Limón and the banana country are only the very formal and rather distantly related introduction to Costa Rica itself. The country the Spaniards knew is on the tableland, 3,000 feet above the sea. In fact, all of Costa Rica (save the two ports, one on the Caribbean and one on the Pacific) is concentrated in four little cities on the top of the Andean plateau. One can see the four of them from the slope of almost any Costa Rican mountain.

For all its diminutive size, however, Costa Rica is not one of the countries which the world can take lightly. It has only 23,000 square miles, or about the area of the American State of West Virginia, and only 460,000 inhabitants (West Virginia has a million and a half), but it is one of the five American countries that have transcontinental railways within their own borders, it produces a goodly portion of the bananas we eat (about 9,000,000 bunches a year) and some 25,000,000 pounds of much esteemed coffee. Costa Rica has a few mines, chiefly in one section, which have exported $1,000,000 U. S. Cy. of gold and silver in a year, and during the war it produced a quarter of a million dollars worth of manganese in one year, 1918. But coffee and bananas and, increasingly, sugar (about 10,000,000 pounds a year) and cacao (4,000,000 pounds a year) are its chief products.

Costa Rica is, therefore, a land agriculturally im-

portant and varied in climate, soil and altitude. All about at Port Limón is a Costa Rica green and hot and flat, but back from the sea are hills, long, green hills, and in the interior mountains and deep valleys, mountains of rock and earth, upturned by volcanic action, perhaps, but not volcanic in the sense that the predominating note is the sharp, thin peak of the volcanic cone. Real volcanic peaks are there, too, and indeed they will be the dominating factor of landscape after we reach the summit of the mountain range, but they are not the mountain range itself. Costa Rica is like the temperate countries in its mountains, while it is like the tropics in the endless green that covers those mountains.

Like all the countries of Central America, Costa Rica has a broad plain on the Atlantic or Caribbean side, a gradual rise to the table-land in the centre of the cordillera (where it is from 3,000 to 4,000 feet above the sea) and a sharp descent to a narrow plain on the Pacific shore. On the Caribbean coast the soil is the sand and mould of innumerable generations of tropical forest, on the table-land it is soft red clayey loam of much richness—the "red earth" of agricultural wealth —and on the Pacific a black volcanic sand tingeing even the beaches of the ocean furnishes the rich, porous sponge of volcanic silt.

From Port Limón the journey is only 104 miles up the mountainside to San José, the capital,—but it takes all day! It always takes all day to make a journey in the tropics. What with the wisdom of men who have

learned that although hurry may get us along faster, it will not take us so far; what with the natural difficulties of keeping a railroad in record-making repair when during six months of the year the daily rain comes down with approximately the gentleness of a fire-hose; and what with the fact that there is no need to hurry because we are going only to San José that day anyway,—with all these we ourselves begin to wonder as we sit in the train, why we ever worried about speed.

Seated in the train, however, we find the world full of interesting things. The Costa Ricans (of whom there are, as noted, a few in Port Limón) come to the train to bid farewell to the two or three who are going to San José. The negro youth who took charge of our baggage wanders serenely in, an hour after all his work is done, to collect his fees, after which he sits down in the seat behind us, rolls himself out luxuriously and engages us in cordial persiflage until the train departs.

At last it does depart, on one of the various standard times that operate in Port Limón (Canal Zone time, Fruit Company time, Railroad time, San José time, etc.). It takes its way out along the edge of the sea, a beach lined with cocoanuts and banana trees, as we see it on our right, and on our left, a murmuring, beautiful, tropical river, running parallel to the ocean, and edging the banana and cocoanut groves. Then forests and banana lands and negroes; negroes individually, in gangs, in huts on stilts, in villages on stilts,—everywhere. And not one Costa Rican of any shade or color.

All this is the United Fruit Company's land, and the labor is from Jamaica and other British West Indian islands, contract labor, coming under the protection of the British government, and with the cash deposit of his fare home whenever he good and well chooses to go home; for "contract labor" from the British colonies is well looked after.

The black belt and the banana belt climb together, first across the low coastal plain, the bananas broken by cocoanut groves now and then, later by cacao plantations, with the brown chocolate beans drying in frames in front of the huts amid the flowers the negroes have planted there. Next the banana groves are broken with broader fields of beans and potatoes and maize patches on the hillsides, and last, far in the hills, by the first coffee plantations. But the black belt never breaks; not once, all the long day's ride, till we reach Cartago, the ancient capital, an hour out of San José, in the highlands. And there, at Cartago, the black belt does end, suddenly and finally. A negro is as rare a sight in San José de Costa Rica as he is in London.

The ride is beautiful, radiant in every conceivable way, in the wealth of tropical forest, first, then in views of the river tumbling over its rocks just below the railway grade, again in the vistas of this same river in a deeper valley and at last in higher hills, with longer distances and slightly more rugged valleys.

Now and then, from the train, there are glimpses of a road, white and deserted, reminding us that once

there passed over these very hills Spanish men-at-arms, afoot and horseback in clanking armor, to claim this lovely wilderness for the white man.

Indeed, lovely and romantic it is, and beautiful in everything except magnificence. It seems to be on too small a scale for that. The beauty gauged to these gentle hills is charming, delightful, but—we retain our breath. Sometimes the lesser crucibles of God turn out the loveliest gems. Yet the glory of the magnificent, vast things, of magenta cliffs against snow-capped peaks, often obtrudes in memory, love though we do the gentler, more jewel-like pictures. Jewel-like these are, however; and in the "riotous tropics." Paradoxes at every turn in Central America!

Toward the end of the journey to San José the vistas lengthen, distance becomes blue and purple, too, and above all loom the volcanoes. The first of these serene, smooth peaks which we are to see in Central America is Irazú, gently smoking, as it rises above old Cartago. And here, at last, we thrill to its beauty, for volcanoes are mountains with a silent, penetrating majesty of their own, going far to the heart of him who comes from lands which know them not.

With Cartago, Costa Rica begins. Here the townsfolk, happy, enthusiastic, are down to greet the train, to take their friends with many embraces, to turn to watch the rest of us, ourselves craning heads out of windows. Moreover, as a picture merely, the town stretches off away from us, and as we leave, a winding

road, leading down and away back toward the Atlantic, seems surely the beginning of the highway that we have seen so often all day long. Only now there are people on it, some in automobiles, some in black coaches, and other simpler folk driving ox-carts, as they march on afoot.

Central America would not be itself without the ox-carts of Costa Rica. Nothing since the chariots of the Pharaohs has been more precious than the Costa Rican ox-cart, with its wheels of one solid piece of wood, mahogany or Spanish cedar, woods relatively light in weight,—if one can think of two solid four-foot wheels three inches thick as being light in weight. These solid wheels are painted in the most fetching colors, reds and blues and delicate grays and mauves, in designs of radiating splendor or almost Oriental harmonies. Then, too, the carts are drawn by oxen invariably matched, perfectly as to shade and color, beautiful sleek oxen, gentle Jerseys or Holsteins with the spots carefully selected to match or complement one another—but often with little consideration as to the relative size of the animals!

It is our first glimpse of that phase of Costa Rica, and soon, now, the train has whisked us on and carried us at last into San José and the blustering, arguing, reassuring bustle of all the railway stations in the world. We contract again for our baggage with a native whose honesty is attested by the fact that he has a number we forget stamped on a metal disc we never saw before—

In the busy modern centre of San José, Costa Rica.

Photo by U. S. Army Air Service.

A bird's-eye view of San José de Costa Rica. In the centre is the fortress-like citadel, and directly above is the American legation, with a tiny tower. The park adjoining also looks on the temporary home of the President, the two-story building near the left-hand edge of the picture.

and are off in our coach down the cobble-paved streets, bouncing from cobble to cobble, but breathing the precious mountain air, devouring the inimitable mountain sunset, and glad that Costa Rica was found, its 400 years ago, and that we have come to visit it.

San José has innumerable qualities of interest as well as charm. It has, for example, a very beautiful bronze group which the Costa Rican coachman tells us is a representation of the Central American republics driving the United States out of Central America. (It is, actually, a very vivid representation of the expulsion of the American filibuster of the '50's, William Walker). San José also has a theatre that cost a million dollars to build, and looks it. It has a cathedral so beautifully proportioned we do not realize it is little larger than a parish church. It has a museum containing a priceless collection of Central American Indian pottery, selected with the care for quality of the collections of the British Museum, a collection of Central American gold idols as wonderful as anything from Egypt or Etruria, an exhibit of stuffed native animals which is supplemented by a collection of the same animals, alive and noisy, in the back-yard, so to speak, of the museum (a most satisfactory addition to a museum).

San José has busy, well-paved, attractive business streets, a cast iron schoolhouse (an experiment in earthquake insurance) and a park populated by the most agreeable and convivial gamins of any city I have ever known. It has a climate unexcelled in the world, with

a bracing and cheering effect on the inhabitants, and excellent, comfortable and reasonable hotels that effectively help us to enjoy it all. Costa Rica has built in its capital a city of which it is justly proud, and to which it can welcome the world with a full assurance that the world will be glad it came.

There is beauty about San José, in every season, the dry as well as the wet. For there are flowers, always, begonias eight inches across the blossom's "Y," geraniums on bushes four feet high, orchids growing in their native forests, or transferred to riotous gardens where they lend life and color to ancient trees. Gladioli and dahlias and gardenias—all undergoing cross-fertilization and creation of new types by seeds, for the growing season is continuous, and the types that run true to form when bulbs are used change in a year with seeds and continuous growth, in Costa Rica.

Outside and all about San José and Cartago and Heredia and Alajuela (the four cities) are coffee plantations, hundreds of them. Gardens they are, too, white and fragrant in blossom-time, red-berried with shiny leaves like luxurious holly bushes at picking time. Through these farms, and between the cities, run wide, dusty roads, cut deep into the rich loam by centuries of passing carts; crude, rough roads, but quite negotiable to motor cars—if tires are not too tightly filled and second speed is working well. It is in Costa Rica, in fact, that we first note the absence of Ford cars, so amusingly common elsewhere throughout the Americas.

The Central American has learned to buy the motor cars that have workable and efficient second speeds, just for travel over bad roads and steep grades.

But it is not its production nor yet its railway nor its roads that make Costa Rica one of the interesting and important places of the world. Nor is it alone its scenic beauty and its scenic serenity, although these weigh much. It seems most to be the Costa Rican people themselves. It takes no expert ethnologist nor the assurances of guidebook or fellow traveler to tell us that here we have a people of almost pure European blood, as free from the Indian problem as the United States or Canada. Nor are we long in realizing that the presence here and the long history of these white men in the tropics is proving in the prosperity, the well-knit self-respect and the clean thinking of the Costa Ricans that despite scientific tradition the white man does not necessarily deteriorate in the tropics, but that his race may live there, indeed, for four hundred years and the strain be none the weaker for the climate.

Costa Rica has what is actually the only pure European population (except for the tiny aristocracies) between the Río Grande at the northern Mexican border and Uruguay beyond the equator in South America. And this under the almost direct rays of the tropical sun!

Racially the Costa Ricans are unique in Latin America in another respect, for they are not only of pure European stock, as Chile, Uruguay and Argentina are,

but they are Spanish only, which the great South American white populations are not. They are, in addition, of three distinct and significant Spanish origins, Galicia, Aragon and Biscay. The *Gallegos*, peaceful workers and farmers, with fixed and provincial ideas but of stolid energy, give character to the workers of the country, and the *Aragoneses* give a trait of firm business sense that appraises peace and prosperity at a more conventional value than do some other Central Americans. The *Vascos* or Basques are of that great race, not Latin but perhaps Celtic, which has given many artists and administrators to Spain and to France, and much of their enviable national character to Argentina, to Chile and to other lands where they have settled thickly.

As a whole, these serene, solemn workmen, in rags though they be, are proud and well-knit, never loose-jointed and lolling as too often is characteristic of the tropics. They are self-respecting and respectful always, offended if you, as the social superior or as the stranger, do not take the honorable side of the walk, next the wall, or if you, as a male, do not jump off into the street if it is necessary, to allow two ladies to walk easily along the pavement next that same wall their own men will willingly give to you.

For in Costa Rica the women hold definite place in the social organization; matriarchy is not dead, nor will it die while it produces Costa Ricans. There is no pretense, no aping of foreign things, in the life of even

as important a city as San José. The ladies go without hats, their head-dress a silken scarf,—their wrap as well. Women of dignity, and, when young, of a beauty famous throughout the Americas. Yet a beauty never cheapened, never vain, looking to the right or to the left if it pleases them, but never to seek admiration nor to evoke it,—and yet beautiful, with dark hair tinged with gold, the Spanish blonde, grey eyes as well as dark ones, and ever that charm of dignity and serenity.

On the male side, too, Costa Rica has its sense of aristocracy, an aristocracy of gentlemen quite as old as Spain herself. This aristocracy has always furnished Costa Rica's presidents, its intellectuals and the men who today, trading in business, in banking, in their coffee plantations, keep the country both rich and cultured. There have been revolutions in Costa Rica in times past and, for a period during the Great War, a revolutionary government evoked the displeasure of President Wilson, so that many of us heard of Costa Rica for the first time in many years when it was excluded, along with Russia and Turkey, from the League of Nations!

That was a page of which no one speaks now in Costa Rica, for the country wiped out that régime with its blood, and re-established the government on the lines of ancient custom. This ingrained custom is the rule of chosen men of what is actually a national kin or clan. Each serves for his single term, each is chosen from the aristocracy, each is elected on his own merits, with lit-

erally no pretence of party lines and no platform but good government, and, of course, the platform of "taking care" of his political friends,—although this phase of politics is in no sense the evil in Costa Rica that it has become in some of the other countries.

This kin idea is important, for without it one will stumble blindly in understanding Central America. The rulers in all the countries are looked upon as part of the people whom they govern, the upper classes are all interrelated, and the lower classes owe some sort of feudal service, whether closely linked by blood as in Costa Rica or attenuated into pure feudalism as in Guatemala, to these "principal families." The revolutions may with little danger of exaggeration almost all be classified, in this sense, as feuds between clans that have blood links through the neighboring countries, all boasting ancient heritages of blood and of grudges, no matter by what political label they may be called. It is largely this essential fact of life in Central America that makes foreign control, or even too much foreign advice, difficult if not impossible. It is also the reason for the frequent calm sufferance of political and fiscal abuses—it is regarded as a sort of tribal matter, and no one's business, save the chiefs'.

This kinship, so far as the welfare of the lower classes is concerned, is an essentially beautiful paternal relationship. In practical operation, however, the attention given by the aristocracies to the problems of their countries is likely to be based on political and

social formulas which are often too conventional to be effective over the long periods of progress through which peoples and nations must grow.

Traditionally, Costa Rica suffers from a combination of social and political conventionality in land and labor. The coffee business is the great national industry, but the crop itself is not produced in great units by individual estates. A few big operators cure and prepare the coffee for the market but the actual production comes from thousands of little farms of one to fifty acres. The mill-man who buys this coffee pays prices which represent either little return on the value of the property producing it, or little for the labor which the farmer-owner put into its production. This, the capitalist naïvely explains, can be done "because the farmer's labor doesn't cost him anything!"

The man who hires himself out by the day is usually this small landowner, and, because he is competing with his own raw coffee prices, he is paid hardly enough to live on, and nothing with which to buy the luxuries of life. And these luxuries, in Costa Rica at least, he would be willing and anxious to buy if he were paid enough money to do so. In 1858, before coffee became the great crop, wages in Costa Rica were an American dollar a day for farm workers. Today they are about half that, and reduced purchasing power probably cuts the actual wage value to about a quarter that of 1858.

In many ways the problem is not Costa Rica's alone, any more than Costa Rica is the only victim of it. It

traces back to practical beginnings, the introduction of coffee into Central America in the middle of the last century. This was following the English free-trade idea of the time, that each country should specialize on the commodities it could produce most cheaply and import those that other countries could raise or manufacture more advantageously than itself. Costa Rican coffee is of surpassing quality, virtually the whole of the best grades of which are sold to connoisseurs in London. But the deliberate, and as we see now, the destructive adoption of this fine coffee industry has not brought great prosperity. Instead, by the complete diversion of Costa Rican agriculture away from food crops, it has forced the importation of a large proportion of the food consumed in the country, with resulting high living costs. This combination of low wages and high living costs seems to have gripped the economic life of Costa Rica. The country produces its great tropical commodity on the price basis of cheap labor and at a continually increasing cost and loss to its own prosperity and at an ultimate loss to those who buy its product at uneconomic prices—and then wonder why Costa Rica is not a better market for manufactured articles!

The Costa Ricans (even the laborers, remember) are men of European ancestry, and would respond readily to the urge for better material things, to that practical phase of the "divine discontent" which lifts man above his clods because he wants more of the mere things

which the world will sell to him,—if he is able to earn the money to buy.

Meanwhile, Costa Rica waits on other phases of its social and economic situation. And yet, all these seem to wait on the solution of the social problem of labor. The population, for example, is inadequate, and yet the children born to replenish it die in infancy as the direct result of conditions incident to the low social standard, conditions that cannot be met so long as the natives have not the means to give themselves and their families what they need and, pitifully enough, really want. For population, too, Costa Rica needs immigration, of white men like its present peasantry, and yet the low standard of wages will never tempt such immigration while present standards last.

Costa Rica now has one of the important transcontinental railways, only 172 miles from ocean to ocean, a narrow-gauge line, three feet from rail to rail, as is standard all over Central America. With Panamá so close, transcontinental traffic is negligible; creating local freight is the road's problem. Thus the need is for branch lines and cart and automobile roads to feed them. Yet there are now virtually no branches, and there are no important highways leading into adjacent country. These must come, and yet today the industrial life of the country remains concentrated on the plateau, in those four little cities and in the country around them, for without workers, or roads, there is no need or

urge for expansion. The railway and road situation seems to wait, then, on the other half of the circle of delays and difficulties that has to do with the lack of adequate wages, with the lack of labor, with the impossibility of new labor's coming while wages are low.

Tied in, too, with the rest, is the fiscal system, for this depends, for its good qualities and for its bad, on the type of business of the country. Essentially, this is of course agricultural, represented by coffee in the Costa Rica of the natives and by bananas in the Costa Rica of the foreigners. The coffee business has given the real characteristics to both the national and the private fiscal system. The banana trade gives little except taxes to the country, for the price the world pays for bananas is largely in the handling,—they are appraised at only forty-five American cents a bunch at the wharf in Port Limón. The handling, of course, is by foreign corporations, and even the wages of their labor in Costa Rica itself are largely spent in the plantation stores for imported goods, and the savings are carried back to the British West Indies when the laborers go home. The export duty of two American cents a bunch on the 9,000,000 bunches of bananas sent abroad annually, and the import duties on foods and supplies makes an item of importance in the government budget, but the profits and the expenditures are made abroad and these do not add to the national wealth of the country.

Coffee growing, on the other hand (to a value of about $7,000,000 U.S. Cy. a year) is chiefly in the hands of

Costa Ricans, and its returns, heavy in proportion to the investment, ought to constitute a steady increment to the national wealth. The export trade balance in favor of Costa Rica is about $7,500,000 U.S. Cy. in a total trade of about $37,000,000 annually. In other words, this much liquid capital ought to be coming back into the country each year for investment and for increase of the national prosperity.

This, however, is precisely what does not happen. The profits of the national coffee industry are not reinvested in Costa Rica, except for a small amount that goes into new lands or new plantings,—the only home investment in which a Central American profoundly believes is real estate. The larger balance is spent abroad in travel, clothes, the education of children, and long periods of residence in the United States or Europe. What is not spent in this way is likely to be banked abroad or invested abroad—little of the increment of the national wealth goes to the raising of the debts of the country or the facilitating of its national or private business. From this condition spring, it seems, most of the fiscal difficulties of Costa Rica. There are no bank deposits, money is loaned by individuals at from eighteen to twenty-four per cent a year, while the banks, working from local standards, find it difficult and expensive to loan at their legal rate of twelve per cent or less the money that they must in turn borrow abroad on their own credit.

In fact, there is virtually no banking in Central Amer-

ica in the sense that banking is understood in England or the United States. There are proportionately few bank deposits, as the custom is to conserve currency (or invest abroad). Thus few cheques are used, and when money is lent it is not transferred from one column to another in the bank's books, and the deposits of the bank thus increased by the loan. Not at all; the money, in Costa Rican or American bills, is stuffed into the saddle-bags of the borrower and moved out to the plantation, where it goes in the old iron safe to be used as needed. Meanwhile, it is withdrawn from circulation —and those who defend the paper money régime in Costa Rica ask where the circulating medium of the country would come from without paper money's "elasticity," while so much actual cash is tied up in loans to the farms. Of course, this mention of the controversy over whether a paper currency is good or bad for a country brings down upon us the whole thousand of brick that the most skilled expert of Threadneedle Street would hardly assume to dig us out of in less than seven hundred printed pages of his own.

The future of Costa Rica seems to have in it two fundamental elements. On the one hand is the character of the country and of the people. On the other is the world outside to which Costa Rica looks today, and will look increasingly, for that partnership of understanding and commerce which is the right and destiny of every honorable nation. To this partnership Costa Rica brings something in many ways unique in the world. Set upon

its mountains, with a civilization which many greater countries could envy, and with a philosophy and charm that few peoples attain in so brief a national existence, Costa Rica watches the world with a self-respect and an understanding which are delightful and intensely valuable. It faces its own problems with a sense of genuine responsibility and asks from the world little which it is not ready and anxious to give. Costa Rica has no need —as its people seem wise enough to know—to seek or to resent the interest of any other people or any other nation. All this makes possible a relationship to the outside world as well as to one another which is at once natural and surprising.

Individualism is the characteristic most reflected in the psychology of Costa Rica. It makes for a sense of national, even racial, separateness that one feels, always, in their attitude toward Panamá on the one hand and toward the rest of Central America on the other. Not only in Costa Rica, but throughout Central America, few of the natives know the other Central American countries. As the President of one of them put it: "I know five thousand North Americans to the five Costa Ricans whom I know."

Everywhere it is the same, but when we first meet this attitude in Costa Rica, amongst men whom we have met or would meet in any capital of Europe, it is something of a shock. That is, it is a shock until we begin to make the journeys between the countries. Then we shall understand it. For as we sit in San José de Costa Rica

the United States and Europe, even, are probably closer as to time (with delays and waiting for boats) and certainly much more comfortably reached, than is even Nicaragua, the nearest neighbor. If we press the residents to tell us of what is going on in the neighboring countries, they give us reluctantly the rumors we brought with us from Panamá,—unless, perchance, they are political refugees, but that is different again! They read the same world newspapers as we do—from New York and San Francisco and London—and their local dailies publish far more foreign news than the wireless service that our steamer picked up en route.

It is this type of world capital, albeit on its own delightful, diminutive scale, that comes to mean Costa Rica to us. It is the Costa Rica that is the vivid and separate red of the rainbow's spectrum. In its clear color purity in San José, we are sure it cannot ever blend with anything unlike itself. Yet blend it does into the orange of Nicaragua, as we shall see.

For when we leave San José, this crimson phase of Costa Rica shades away. The well-regulated trains of the Caribbean side are no more, the cleanliness of the capital disappears with the passing of the cathedral towers into the dawn which we leave behind us, and on the dusty, endlessly slow train, we begin at last our real "plunge into the jungle." The road down is not without its picturesqueness. Gorgeous valleys, towering mountains, and vistas of an old cart road far below us give thrills in plenty. There are many stops, and the

people are all Costa Ricans now, offering us their best from the markets of the trainside, with their infinite variety of fruit, of corn cakes, of eggs, of chicken and cheese and salads served on green banana leaves. We find interest and much understanding of Costa Rican life and thought, too, in that six-hour ride with which we cover the sixty-nine miles to the port of Puntarenas.

At the end we are lifted bodily from our car-seats at the first glorious glimpse of the Pacific,—it all but laps the window ledge as our train suddenly slips through a cut in the mountains and steams out along the very shore of the sea under a cliff, three hundred feet of towering limestone above us.

At Puntarenas we may achieve our steamer for Corinto, Nicaragua,—no one ever knows in San José when they will come. Or we may wait in an atmosphere of mosquitoes, boiled water and buzzards for a week, —or more. That is one of the things that can happen in Costa Rica, just as it can also happen (and probably will) in many another country of Central America.

Yet whichever it may be, the time we spend in those hot and dreary tropical seaports serves an excellent purpose. For there, in a sameness unbelievable, looking out on the identical vast Pacific, we cut sharp and clear into our minds our impressions of each of the rainbow countries. The Pacific seaports, at the sacrifice of their own identities, serve us well and generously, to individualize and to make us love the better the delightful countries behind them, and beyond them.

CHAPTER III

NICARAGUA—ORANGE DAWN

THE orange dawn of Nicaragua is no mere figure of speech. It is one of the gorgeous realities of the tropics. All through the verdant paradise of Central America we shall find gorgeous sunrises, but none the equal of that of Corinto, the port of Nicaragua. Volcanic dust, smoke, what you will, are its causes, but the sun that rises each steaming morning behind the five sharp peaks at Corinto seems, each morning, more gorgeous and awe-inspiring than any other dawn in the world. It is the crudest possible splendor, of a shade we declare no sunrise could ever be, declare as we gaze, open-eyed, upon it. A red that is orange and yet crude red again—a painter had needs mix all the reds and yellows of his palette to match it. Then, when the sun rises, a golden ball in the lowest valley of the volcanoes, we suddenly realize that it is rolling into a sky all pale mauves and greens and yellows, splashed through with great horizontal shafts of white light. The five peaks are black against it, where they were a living ultramarine against the orange of a moment before.

So much for the tints of orange dawn. Corinto, where we come upon it, is the port nearly to the end of the Pacific coast of Nicaragua as we sail northwestward

from Costa Rica. All night and half the day we have skirted Nicaragua before we reach this haven. And in each of those hundred and fifty miles, Nicaragua differs from Costa Rica as if they were a world apart.

Costa Rica is marked by precipitous, sharp hills and rough mountains, fading off into the distance of serrated blue ranges. Even from the sea, their heavy atmosphere makes them seem distant when they are relatively close, quite the opposite of the thin atmosphere of the mountains of the high plateaux, where great distances shrink to pink proximity. As our ship takes its way along the shore of Costa Rica from Puntarenas the rocky borders are sharp and clear-cut, the sky-line and the very islands crisp and castellated.

Nicaragua is ponderous, heavy with verdure. Wide-spreading trees rise against the sky on hilltops shaped like elongated hogbacks, or like round-domed huts of black giants. It is tropical, brooding, African, almost, and the edge of the sea laps ochre-yellow rocks, the foreground of hills that are of purple distance, not of blue.

San Juan del Sur, a port famous in the annals of the "'49ers" en route to California, and of the American filibusterers of the '50's, is set in a jewel-like circlet of hills, but round hills, round and low, leveled by erosion or slow rolling-up from the sea. On one domed promontory is a squat lighthouse, round-towered. A road winding out from the town is cut heavily into the widely sloping hillsides. The town itself seems low and silent, the people slow and dark. A strange contrast. Bare and brown as Costa Rica is on its Pacific side, this is barer, darker.

The whole coast-line of Central America has these contrasts; Costa Rica, sharp and steep on its mountain-tops, then the long line of Nicaragua, cut low as if for the passing of the great new canal that is yet to come. Honduras, sharp and hilly again, and then Salvador, with its broad green fields and almost temperate-zone climate. Last, Guatemala, set in its mountain heights, a crown of volcanoes. The three primary colors of the rainbow accented on the mountain tops, the secondary, orange and green, on the lowlands.

When we leave San Juan behind us, sped by tanned but dignified and understanding officials, a peak of volcano rises behind the shore hills, seeming to have a wider base, a gentler slope, than those seen before. This is Ometepe, worshiped by the Indians of ancient times, an island of the great Lake Nicaragua, twenty miles inland. Even Ometepe is ponderous, although preciously beautiful and symmetrical, with its smoke not rising clear to heaven, but curling back about the cone to embrace it, white and heavy-rolling.

No town is seen, no sign of life, now, until our ship turns in between two low, green-clad promontories, skirts sharply that on the left and suddenly reveals to us, on the left, still, the pleasant, scattered houses of Corinto—boldly, barely, on the wrong side of the water, surely miles from the mainland! Corinto, in fact, is all but an island, set as if in the very middle of the crescent bay. The railroad finds its way there, however. Wharf space for two ships and a well-dredged channel combine with its perfect protection to make it the finest harbor on the Pacific side of Central America.

Corinto is a famously typical tropical port. Internationalism is its outstanding characteristic. A capable American chief is in charge of the custom-house, the official centre of the life of the port. There is a British vice-consul (in the import and export business) who is the social arbiter of the town. And there is an American consul—the only full-fledged Consul in Central America whose seat is a port city. If our ship flies the American flag, the American flag will in turn greet us from the consulate, a picturesque frame house down the beach from the wharf. If, by mistake (for it is not kind, under the tropic sun, to impose social burdens) some one has asked the Consul to meet us, he will be there at the dock in the full panoply of his office, which in this case is courtesy, a white duck suit, and much wisdom of the land which greets us. There is an Italian hotel of rambling wood (chiefly mahogany) finished in the rough, officially lighted by electricity in the wide, high office and by uncertain acetylene gas in the bedrooms—although actually by the tallow candle at the bedside. We dress, I may add, in the morning by the light of the candle and the orange glory of that impossible sunrise.

The native section of Corinto is characterized by streets and foot-paths of sand that has no bottom, and by one-story whitewashed frame dwellings sometimes "shaded" by isolated palm-trees. Yet the town is attractive—perhaps more so to him who is traveling by coasting steamer than to the passenger on a through liner, or to the resident.

Most important of all, Corinto, with its sweep of har-

bor, sea and green mainland, is the gateway beyond which lies the most typical of the countries of Central America. Nicaragua is still almost virgin, so far as modern development, or tourists, is concerned, and yet it is being acted upon by a massed formation of political and economic forces and human elements significant of the present era in all Central America.

To begin with, Nicaragua is a country of no mean area; it comprises 49,200 square miles, about that of the American State of Alabama, or of England. Its population, however, is placed at 638,119, as against Alabama's 2,138,093 and England's 35,000,000. The national heritage of these 638,000 people consists of climates ranging from the heat of the Pacific plain and the dank fertility of the Caribbean jungle to the coffee lands of Matagalpa and the chill of the mining country on the tops of the parallel ranges of mountains that traverse the length of the country. They have two lakes of the first rank, Lake Nicaragua, which is ninety-two miles long and thirty-four miles wide, and Lake Managua (connected with Lake Nicaragua by a fifteen-mile river) which is thirty-two miles long by sixteen miles wide. Both are some 135 feet above the sea, a fact that entered into the consideration of the so-called sea-level canal route of Nicaragua, when Panamá was chosen for the great cut, in 1902.

Lake Nicaragua is the largest body of fresh water south of the Great Lakes of Canada and the United States, and north of Lake Titacaca in the highlands of South America. From it, eastward, flows the San Juan River, once the highway of river steamers which, but for

Photo by U. S. Army Air Service.

The City of Managua, Capital of Nicaragua. The large open square in the foreground is the *Campo del Marte* (Field of Mars) and on the left side are the buildings where the American Marines stood post from 1912 to 1925. Directly above the *Campo del Marte* in the picture, is the wooded park at the edge of Lake Managua, at the right hand side of which is the cathedral and, nearer, the white roofs of the National Palace.

one set of rapids, carried passengers from the port of San Juan del Norte [Greytown] on the Caribbean across to the western edge of the lake without change. Thence they traveled by stage overland the twelve miles to San Juan del Sur, completing the link from ships of the Atlantic to those of the Pacific. This was the shortest route from New York to California in the hustling days of 1849 and so continued until the opening of the Union Pacific across the prairies of the United States in 1875. The San Juan River has always been regarded as part of the logical canal route, and indeed but for political and physical causes which interfered with navigation at San Juan del Norte in recent years, it might still be doing its part in transporting passengers and mail. As it is, the transportation facilities across Nicaragua are worse today than they were in 1850.

There are other rivers, finding their way chiefly through the jungles to the Caribbean shore. The steep mountainside of the Pacific slope is also well drained, but these short rivers flow into the lakes and excepting in the northwest no rivers of value to agriculture enter the Pacific. Today, as of old, there is hardly any navigation by lake or river excepting on hand-propelled canoes or small launches. The Nicaraguan continues to live his life afoot or horseback or, now, in train and automobile—with two of the greatest lakes in the world in the heart of his country.

The highland country of Nicaragua is devoted to coffee and to a certain amount of cattle breeding, and a few silver mines are worked in the mountains. As in all Central America, the high country is pleasant, produc-

tive and in many ways the happiest region. The coffee district of Matagalpa is accessible by a cart-road passable for motor cars only part of the year, but it is none the less the seat of a large and prosperous foreign colony and is a native resort of rare charm and fame.

Of the life of Nicaragua, however, we must think chiefly in terms of cities. It is not common for the country folk to live in isolated farms in any Spanish-American country, but in Nicaragua the towns are both numerous and relatively large. Managua, the capital, with a population of 60,342, León with 47,243, and Granada with 21,925, would seem a sufficient centralization in a country of a little over 600,000, yet besides these there are Matagalpa, in the high coffee country, with 32,271, Masaya, near Granada, with 17,287, Chinandega, between Corinto and León, with 14,415, and others, like Corinto, with smaller populations but much national importance.

The 170 miles of railway which traverse Nicaragua connect Corinto, as the Pacific port, with all these cities excepting Matagalpa. On our journey inland we leave Corinto in the early morning (as always) but aboard a train which every day, whether there are tourists or not, carries a parlor car of native-wrought mahogany. We pass through a country of confined plains, grown up with tall grasses, isolated trees with wide-spreading branches high in air, or bits of jungle, and bounded by those long, low, round-knobbed hills.

We pass Chinandega, traverse the sugar country, bright green always, and reach León. There the car fills with handsome, prosperous and cordial Nicara-

guans, who have wisely passed the night in this cooler city, even if they missed the glory of the resplendent Corinto dawn. León was the original capital of the Spanish province of Nicaragua, and retains its prestige still. But, as good travelers, the republican capital must claim us first, before we explore the beauty and charm of even old León.

From León to Managua is five hours' travel through a rolling, sparsely wooded country that suggests, again and again, the African veldt. Then at last, Managua, set on the edge of the Lake of the same name, the somewhat dingy but pleasant capital of the country. Beautifully located, with hills rising behind it, and a precious blue crater lake as the centre of a park high above the city, Managua suffers chiefly from the ailments of modernity. León, which is behind us, and Granada, fifty miles further on, on the edge of the great Lake Nicaragua, were the rival cities of colonial days, and Managua was established, in a way, as a compromise capital between the two. Its buildings are low, most of its streets of the clay with which unadorned nature endowed the site, the waterfront (which might well accommodate a handsome boulevard) dedicated to swamps and reed-birds, Managua fails of much that León and Granada could teach or might lend it. But it has the comforts which the traveler begins to appreciate, and a people famous for their hospitality and charm throughout Central America and beyond. A fine club, where the President himself comes at the "aperitif-hour," a comfortable hotel, and generous homes, make Managua's welcome one to be remembered.

For many years the government of Nicaragua, and so the official predominance at Managua, was of the Conservative party, that is, the group traditionally indigenous to Granada, where one street boasts of having furnished more presidents to Nicaragua than, say, the State of Ohio has given to the United States. The ruling classes of Nicaragua have almost always been of the best blood, as in all Central America, and the Conservative group includes some, but far from all, of the most charming and cultivated of these old families. In all the offices of government, one finds men of standing and ability, most of the old Creole stock, and nearly all of them closely linked by ties other than interest, with the United States.

Granada, for instance, is a city of merchants, and the old families have been proudly engaged in trade for generations. This gives them commercial links abroad, but in addition, the children of these old families have, many of them, been educated in the United States or England. English is, as a matter of fact, almost as common at a fashionable dance in Granada as in Washington. A youngster returning from years in an American boarding school struggles to get back his Spanish with the persistency (albeit with better luck) of a tourist conscientiously seeking to acquire it for the first time.

Granada is one of the gems of the cities of the New World—a fact which the tourist agencies apparently will not take it into their heads to prove to the mass of humanity until Granada's fascination is absorbed by ugly modernization. It is an ancient Spanish city, small in area, with sunny streets and plazas, beautiful build-

ings, old and new, and an atmosphere of charm and quiet rare to come upon anywhere in the world, and utterly unexpected in unheralded Nicaragua. For foreigners it is peculiarly bathed in romance as the scene of the exploits of the American filibusterer William Walker who from 1855 to 1860, from the towers of these very churches and in these very streets and old palace-houses fought and schemed his way to the actual presidency of Nicaragua. Romance, calm, quiet and pervading, the magic of still, deserted, moonlit streets—Granada will haunt us long after we have left it. And the charm of the Great Lake and its jewelled islands (they call them "diamonds," here) will make us look with condescension on the show places of the Thousand Islands of the St. Lawrence.

León, the larger of the two rival cities, is yet another spirit and atmosphere. Like old Spain, too, but the Spain of life and energy, not of contemplation and beauty, as Granada seems. The cobbled streets, the high sidewalks, the people on horseback, young and old, rich and poor, trotting past under the trees or joggling, mule or burro-back, seated on the rump of the beast, Spanish-fashion, the pictures crowd upon one another. Dozens of fine churches, too, and one great, white cathedral, low-built, to withstand earthquakes, as it has done for three hundred years. Within is the tomb of Rubén Darío, beloved of all who read the rich literature of the Spanish tongue, a symbolic, tiny shaft rising above his tomb.

Bare and fine and cold, are these whitewashed walls in the cathedral, and filled with just such unsightly

tombstones as in all the old cathedrals of the world. The walls are decorated, however, with fourteen vast canvases in colors vivid and modern, as if a new El Greco had come to a new Toledo. For they are new, these canvases, scarcely a quarter century since the painting, and by a son of León, Antonio Sarría, almost as daringly modern as was El Greco when he painted his pictures and left them to hang unappreciated for five hundred years in old Toledo. Sarría is not El Greco, but León has made much of him and given him vast spaces in her cathedral. And where but in such an atmosphere as that of wise old Nicaragua did ever prophet receive his laurels in his homeland? One begins to understand why Darío came back from an adoring Europe to die in his young, full years in old León.

Outside are crowded streets and a picturesque market-place jostling the outer walls of the cathedral. The market is full of wise old women and contemplative old men, and we can find a dozen Sancho Panzas amongst them with the utmost ease. There are busy highways and buzzing shops—Spanish tradesmen of the old tradition rule here. There seems much more business, also (it is a larger city, to be sure) than in Granada, or than in Managua.

Behind the walls of the houses, within the wide-open doors where we might even enter, unknown, with but the universal introduction of the stranger-traveler—within those houses we shall find, too, something rarer than all the color of orange dawns or busy market-places or tombed cathedrals. For still, in Nicaragua, men talk and think. León is the centre of the Liberal party, that

A street in Managua, Nicaragua, looking toward the *Campo del Marte* where for thirteen years the American flag floated over the camp of the "Legation Guard" of one hundred marines.

A street in Old León, Nicaragua.

is, of the party that was out of power for the years after the fall of the Liberal dictator Zelaya in 1910. Yet here, none the less, we meet with a frankness unexpected, utterly illuminating and disarming. We find a group of men who discuss their national problems both from the viewpoint of Nicaragua and Central America, and—from that of the United States! They couch everything in terms of idealism, and that without apology.

Such men we shall meet in every country of Central America, and they will send us on, with letters, to others like them, as if they were a great secret order of practical dreamers and men of high vision. In Nicaragua most, but not all, of them are Liberals, just as in Honduras they are Unionists, and in the other countries they are philosophers, political refugees or, paradoxically, retired leaders of the active political parties. But they are all the same fine type, and if in León they speak with excessive freedom, yet they do see a light and by the glow of that light they seek the way. These men of León fought for years, against what they call "the American intervention" in Nicaragua; they it was who were ready to give it up, its advantages along with its disadvantages, without a practical regret. And yet they know, thoroughly, what the United States might and could and, as they say, must do to help their country. Truly, one spends Athenian nights seated in these tropic drawing rooms in the big, immeasurably comfortable Austrian bent-wood rockers, discussing the problems of Nicaragua with men whose solutions are all so sure—and so ideal.

Of course, the subject of discussion and the first problem to resolve in Nicaragua has been and will long be the relation of the native government to influences exercised by the various government and business interests of the United States. This problem, universal though it is in the international problems of today, is vital, national, patriotic to the Nicaraguans.

Ever since 1912, the United States has been working out, hand in hand with Nicaragua, we might say, one of the great problems of our time—that of the helping of a weak nation by a strong one without absorption, physical, commercial or moral.

For many years this relationship was in many ways closer than even the relationship of the Washington government to the governments of the American States. It was signified by the presence of American soldiers, and it lasted officially from 1912 to 1925. This "American intervention" began when, at the request of the Nicaraguan government, 2,000 American Marines landed at Corinto and made their way to the capital to protect American lives and property during a revolutionary outbreak. It ended when the last one hundred Marines were withdrawn in 1925.

Yet long before 1912 Americans had their part in Nicaraguan affairs. When the gold rush to California began in 1849, Cornelius Vanderbilt established a line of transport across Nicaragua from New York and New Orleans to San Francisco. Thousands of gold-seekers used this route and it became the de luxe road for travel during more than a quarter century.

It was this opening of communications via Nica-

ragua that also brought on in 1855 the invasion of William Walker, the picturesque San Francisco editor, and his fifty-six "immortal" filibustering followers. Theirs was a wild adventure whose excuse is even today still uncertain, although it has always been believed in Nicaragua that their ultimate motive was to extend the slave territory of the United States.

Walker fought his way to the presidency of Nicaragua and, before he finished, was in a war with all the other four republics of Central America. At one time they succeeded in making it so uncomfortable for him that he surrendered to the captain of an American warship, and escaped the country. But the end of this epic of adventure did not come until Commodore Vanderbilt (whom Walker had made his enemy by dabbling in finance and making the operation of the passenger business across Nicaragua difficult and expensive) took a hand in the affair and furnished men and money to Walker's enemies. Walker was forced to give himself up a second time in 1860, but on this occasion the British naval officer to whom he entrusted his life turned him over to the Central American coalition which was fighting him, and they promptly executed him at Truxillo, Honduras, September 12, 1860.

Today little enmity toward Walker remains in Nicaragua, and the attitude seems rather that Nicaragua was, in her war on the great filibusterer, an ally of the United States, and by that struggle forged its first links of common interest with Washington. Nicaragua, by this way of viewing it, was the first scene of the American Civil War—for Nicaraguan and European historians state

(most of the American authorities on Walker do not accept this) that Walker's last words before his death were this message to the American Southern States:

> I have defended the cause of slavery in a foreign land. You have failed to aid me in that battle. Soon you will yourselves have to defend that cause, in your own fields of corn and cotton.

It is a far cry from Walker to the Major of Marines who commanded the American troops in the Nicaraguan capital half a century later, and it is a greater difference in relationship than in time. For if Walker brought war and pillage, the Marines brought peace and progress. There is always the question as to the wisdom and justice of the use of soldiers for police duty, or indeed for any duty excepting fighting, but the fact remains that, for the years they were there, peace reigned in Nicaragua, by the mere presence of those one hundred American soldiers. Where there had been revolution there was no revolution, and hardly an attempt at it from 1912 to 1925. Every Nicaraguan knew that the American troops could not move to suppress a righteous revolution against tyranny if tyranny existed. But they also knew that the Marines stood guard against anarchy and unrest and, too, against the political custom (for which Central America is unduly famous) of changing governments by revolution in lieu of election.

It happened that the peace the Marines brought had a local political result. This result was that the Conservative government was maintained in power free from all political danger because the election machinery of Nicaragua (as of practically all Central America) was

at the time they arrived inadequate to provide for a peaceable change of government excepting to chosen successors of the administration in power. During the "intervention" period, however, Nicaragua enacted and put to the test a new electoral law, designed by an American expert. It was just before the first election under that law, in October, 1924, that the Department of State in Washington announced that the Marines would be withdrawn after the installation of the government then to be elected.

That 1924 election, while not all that was hoped for, was probably the best election ever held in Nicaragua. It transferred the power to a coalition government that felt ready to carry on without the Marines. They asked only that the Marines stay for the six months needed for foreign officers to organize and train a native constabulary to take their place. The Marines were withdrawn August 4, 1925, and independent government, if not always peace, has followed.

When the balance is cast up, the achievement of the Marines' thirteen years station in Nicaragua will rank high among gestures of international friendship. This is true whether we approve or disapprove of the principle of their use as a moral police force. The Marines gave peace and security, and then when it seemed that that peace had become a national habit, they withdrew—contrary to all predictions of Latin American jingoes, who had said for thirteen years that the United States would never withdraw.

The whole situation is summed up in the words of a shrewd native observer. Speaking during the "inter-

vention," he said that "the presence of the Marines is only an incident in the close and friendly political relations of the United States to Nicaragua."

The thirteen years' vigil of the Marines was in fact the culmination of a political situation. This began to be manifested with the exhaustion of American forbearance toward the meddling of José Santos Zelaya, President and dictator of Nicaragua from 1893 to 1910, in the affairs of the other Central American countries. In 1908-10, Zelaya extended his meddling to the affairs of the United States in Central America and even in México. He became such a menace to good relations and even to peace that the United States, by various means (including tacit threats by American gunboats to the great benefit of the anti-Zelaya forces) brought about his downfall.

It was at this period and through the Zelaya incident that the United States stepped forward as the militant champion of democratic government in Nicaragua. The insistence was primarily on decent international relations, not only between Nicaragua and the United States, but amongst all the Central American countries. But in the development of this situation, the whole question of Nicaraguan internal politics came up for its solution as well. Zelaya, as a Liberal, had overthrown a succession of Conservative presidents who for thirty years before him had maintained effective government and calm succession of power in the country.

The United States, rightly or wrongly, held the Liberal party of that day, as well as the dictator himself, responsible for the undoubted evils of his government.

This attitude was clearly shown when, in 1912, a revival of the Liberal régime was threatened. Then the United States, at the request of the Conservative leaders, landed 2,000 Marines in Corinto to protect American lives and property against the Liberal revolution. Those Marines took part in one pitched battle for the Conservative government, routing the Liberals at Masaya with American field guns. Skirmishes on their own account were brief, and within a week they entered on their long garrison duty at the capital. Then a peace settled down on Nicaragua, a peace unbroken for the next thirteen years.

Side by side with the military and political events runs, now, a financial story. This is not without its bearing on the sequence of events, but the political intervention preceded the financial developments, and the entry of American finance into Nicaragua was a consequence and not the cause of the political.

Before Zelaya, Nicaragua had not had a bad record with its foreign loans, and a bond issue of 1909 for £1,250,000 had been sold in London at 92. After this money was received, however, Zelaya officially abrogated the liquor and tobacco monopolies whose returns had been pledged to guarantee the loan, and in 1912 the coupon went to default. To handle the situation thus arising negotiations for a larger loan had been begun in New York a year before the Marines landed. Not unnaturally, however, no responsible American bankers were clamoring to assume this complicated and uncertain problem. The Department of State itself had to induce Brown Brothers & Co. and J. & W. Seligman & Co., two of the great banking houses of New York, to con-

sider issuing a Nicaraguan loan. This was after the Marines had entered and the Nicaraguan political situation had found a home on the State Department doorstep. The plan agreed on was for the finances of Nicaragua to be thoroughly reorganized, and administered by foreigners, in connection with the loan. The plan was to be supported by a treaty which the Department of State hoped to have approved by the United States Senate. The loan was to be for $15,000,000 U.S. Cy.

It was at about this time, in the United States, that Secretary of State Knox coined the unfortunate phrase "dollar diplomacy." In the interval since 1912, what was probably the original idea back of "dollar diplomacy" has been all but lost and the phrase has become one of opprobrium, hopelessly mixed up with questionable concessions, ruthless financial groups and supposedly cruel abuses of reputedly innocent Latin American governments. The original plan, however, was that by means of loans on fair terms, and careful and friendly supervision of the finances of Latin American countries, the United States could strengthen international ties by helping to solve the fiscal problems of younger countries. Thus the friendly dollar was expected to do the work that old-fashioned diplomacy was failing to do.

In 1911-12, loan plans under the ægis of the United States were taken up in the five republics of Central America. Nowadays, Central Americans make a great virtue of the refusal of this or that country to be so grossly "deceived" in 1911-12 as to accept the "dollar diplomacy," but none the less, if the plan had been given full working swing, affairs in Central America in gen-

eral might today be far different and even Nicaragua itself might years ago have achieved its bettered financial condition.

All the countries, excepting Nicaragua, rejected "dollar diplomacy." There, under the protection of the Marines, if you wish it put that way, was installed a far-reaching plan. This had been designed, after a thorough study, by Thomas C. Dawson, the understanding and capable envoy of the American Department of State. Under the "Dawson pacts," agreed to by the political leaders, the rehabilitation of Nicaragua, politically and financially, was fairly begun. Internal political dissentions were adjusted by carefully steered and binding agreements, and the financial plans that had been working without general direction were adjusted and co-ordinated. The banking connection with Brown Brothers & Co. and J. & W. Seligman & Co. was established. The plan for stabilization of the currency on a gold basis was put far on the way to realization.

The customs supervision, with a highly trained American collector-general in charge, was started and under its guarantees the Browns and Seligmans arranged for the interest on the British debt to be cut from six to five per cent—paying the cost of the customs administration and leaving its substantial savings as full profit to the Nicaraguan government.

A Mixed Claims Commission, of Americans and Nicaraguans, was organized and wrought a series of remarkable results. It first cut down the floating debt of Nicaragua (including any number of elaborate claims for revolutionary destructions and "moral" damages)

from $13,000,000 U.S. Cy. to a little over $1,800,000—the largest job of "revision downward" ever done in Central America. Surtaxes on customs and other special taxes were arranged to pay interest and amortization on this $1,800,000, and a High Commission of one Nicaraguan, one American, and an American umpire when needed, was put in to administer them, with an indirect influence over the Nicaraguan national budget designed to keep the payments up to the best figure possible, so as to achieve rapid retirement of the bonds.

The bankers had originally been called on to float the loan of $15,000,000 only if the treaty between the United States and Nicaragua were ratified. The United States Senate failed to confirm the treaty, and the bankers loaned Nicaragua only the $1,500,000 immediately needed for the conversion of the currency and the establishment of the bank. This loan was made direct and was not floated on the market as a bond issue.

This was the only money loaned to Nicaragua from the time the Americans came in 1912 until the last Marines left in 1925. The loan of $15,000,000 planned in 1912 was never made, nor was a later loan of $9,000,000, planned in 1920. But Nicaragua progressed and prospered, and showed its fibre as a financial factor to so substantial a degree that a period of continuous peace following the withdrawal of the Marines was probably alone needed to establish the national credit on a thoroughly sound basis.

The National Bank of Nicaragua was one of the important factors in Nicaragua's financial rehabilitation. It was set up, under one of the original Dawson pacts,

by the Browns and Seligmans, the Nicaraguan government holding forty-nine per cent of the stock from the first organization. Later the remaining stock was taken by American interests other than Brown-Seligman group, and the bank was administered first by the Mercantile Bank of the Americas and later by its successor, the Bank of Central and South America, New York. In 1924, the Nicaraguan government obtained full control of the bank by purchase of the stock with funds saved by careful administration of the budget.

The Bank of Nicaragua has the sole right to issue currency, and its backing of this currency continues on the basis originally planned. That is, by means of a revolving credit in New York, the *cordova,* the new national monetary unit, is stabilized at its even value of the full American dollar. As the sole bank of issue, it has about $2,000,000 in circulation, in the place of some 30,000,000 depreciated paper pesos that were formerly issued by several banks.

With this right of issue, however, the National Bank was expected to finance practically all the business, both commercial and agricultural, of the country. This is considered the natural function of a bank of issue in Latin America—that is the reason it is given the right to issue currency, so that it may have the currency to lend, as the native looks on the matter.

The neglect of the Bank of Nicaragua to take up, at first, these implied duties on as broad a scale as the people wished caused much of the criticism of the American bankers that was rife at the beginning. The Nicaraguans considered the bank was doing them and

their country a grievous wrong and must at the same time be enriching itself prodigiously. The American banking officials insisted upon following American methods, however. To them it was not good banking to make long-term loans, nor to extend unduly the bank's currency circulation. They also wished to encourage deposits as a means toward making the country steadily more capable of doing its own business financing.

One of the most interesting developments of the whole financial situation in Nicaragua has been, however, the gradual public adoption, to a notable degree, of just such principles of sound business finance. Deposits have increased, just as merchants have come to talk in terms of drafts against bill of lading instead of long-term credits or ten-year loans. All this is startlingly new and was probably due in no small degree to the sometimes stern terms of the Bank of Nicaragua, from 1912 to 1924.

When the government finally took over the bank, the American administration was continued, but the policies were extended and a somewhat broader plan of local finance was undertaken. Nicaragua had learned its lessons, however, and the once stern régime of the Browns and Seligmans soon came to be looked upon with something approaching appreciation.

When we boil the situation down, however, we are likely to decide that not all the banking troubles in Nicaragua have to do with the bank. It does not require the shrewdest observer to realize that all bankers and most American officials connected with the fiscal plan would be relatively unpopular until Nicaragua ob-

tained the loan of $9,000,000 U.S. Cy. to which the financial plan was scaled in its revision of 1920. This loan has always been one of the type of Latin America financial projects definitely deserving of support, for it was designed to fulfill an important national aspiration.

This aspiration was the construction of the long-needed railway across the country from the Atlantic to the Pacific. This railway is one of the potential world highways across America, and with the great Lake Nicaragua would open an extensive and potentially rich territory to development. The plan has been to build a new railway, less than 200 miles long, from a port on the Caribbean (probably Monkey Point) to Lake Nicaragua. There lake boats would connect it with the Pacific railway at Granada, and also with towns on the borders of the lake and with highways leading to other towns.

The money for this railway was included in the $9,-000,000 loan plan of 1920. The financial arrangements were revised in that year and new guarantees turned over to the banking group to insure the loan. Conditions in the money market, however, suddenly made the floating of any loan at that time impracticable, to the justifiable disappointment of Nicaragua. The guarantees were not given up, however, and the plan was not revised.

Thus almost the whole revenues of Nicaragua remained pledged, from 1920 on, for the repayment, to Americans, of only the old $1,500,000 loan of the Browns and Seligmans and the balance of $1,750,000 which was due for the repurchase of the Pacific railway,

sold to the bankers during the war-time stringency. These were both paid off in August, 1924, and the whole machinery of American customs and budget supervision was functioning only to collect the service on the British debt (then less than £900,000) and to administer the balance of $2,500,000 U.S. Cy. Guaranteed Customs bonds.

The situation has factors that are amusing, like this picture of an elaborate American machine for collecting a relatively small British debt, but it also has elements of national tragedy to the Nicaraguans. Yet while their hopes for the railway were so often disappointed, and while in some ways they could not always see wherein they gained from the American control of their affairs, the Nicaraguans have gone forward with much good faith to compliance with their obligations.

Above everything else looms the bare and splendid fact that, in a little over twelve years, the Nicaraguans, without a big foreign loan and virtually without foreign aid (excepting the carefully conceived American advice and assistance in administration) wiped out their old floating debt, paid every foreign obligation as due and in doing so achieved an accredited, prosperous state free from foreign supervision, and made a record outstanding in Central American history.

Not always have the Nicaraguans done this willingly, but the fact that they cleared their books to so great an extent and that they did it with American counsel is an accomplishment in inter-American diplomacy of friendship that is worthy of far more praise than it receives.

Nicaragua is not without men of vision who see clear

and clean to the core of this accomplishment. The late President of Nicaragua during "intervention" phrased the situation in these words of his own:

> Nicaragua has by the accident of fate been chosen to help the United States in working out the problem of their relationship to Latin America. The problem is everywhere the same, for the United States are, by their power and place, the natural protector of these countries and logically hold their place of influence in this hemisphere. Latin America enjoys existence as separate, free nations, in large part because of the United States. Even Chile and Argentina, for all their pride, owed their opportunity to achieve their high standing as independent nations to the United States; without the United States and the Monroe Doctrine they would, even today, be unable to stand before any first-class European power.
>
> The difference between these others and Nicaragua, then, is that Nicaragua recognizes and is proud to admit the fact of this relationship with the United States. Nicaragua works with the facts as they are, and is solving its problems by the hard realities of its situation. As a result of this acceptance of the facts, happily and pleasantly, Nicaragua today enjoys peace, security and real independence, which it has achieved through the United States. Moreover (as I can say with authority), Nicaragua has not had and never will have any threats against its independence from the United States. For seven years I was foreign minister of Nicaragua; I was Minister in Washington for two years, and now for three years President. Never in all those twelve years have I found the United States grasping or unjust, or unwilling to help as wisely as they knew in all that concerned Nicaragua's welfare.

All this is the reflection of a fine attitude, rarer than we shall fully realize until we have gone the length of Central America and have seen how much greater and more dignified it is than much that will be found in other lands. It is not an attitude of subservience in any way, but a grasp of the inherent possibilities of interna-

tional co-operation. In closest contact with the United States, American good faith is accepted in Nicaragua more fully than in any other country of Central America, or perhaps indeed in all Latin America. The ancestors of these Nicaraguans met the Americans across the barricades of Walker's battlefields, and learned to understand them. Their descendants have no sense of intolerance or dislike—and in saying this, I am not deceived by mere philosophical adaptation on their part to what they might well regard as "a situation."

These men look upon the experiment that was carried through in Nicaragua with a sense of satisfaction, an appreciation of the service that it would and will be to humanity if they, with the United States, can prove, just once in world history, that a great nation and a small nation can work and walk in a genuine partnership.

Nicaragua was well chosen for this experiment, albeit it was chosen, as the president quoted said, "by accident," by forces other than mere diplomatic planning. The country is very rich, it is located in one of the great trade routes of the world, and probably most important of all, Nicaragua is the site of what must ultimately be a second inter-oceanic canal.

Yes, the canal! For the canal is not a subject that is taken lightly or discussed as anything but an inevitability by those who live in Nicaragua, or indeed by any who study the Central American situation seriously. We smile at first, perhaps, but soon we come to read the writing on the wall, and realize how much more the Nicaraguan canal will mean than merely a second ditch for the passing of ships, although even that is now no

mere fantastic dream. In 1914 the United States paid Nicaragua $3,000,000, U.S. Cy., for the perpetual option on the site of any canal across Nicaragua, and for the right to build an elaborate scheme of defensive works to protect the site, and the canal, when it should be built. A sea-level canal, in Nicaragua, in the private garden, as it were, of the American nations, not in the open highway of Panamá—there is much that is practical in the talk over the time when the canal shall come, in Nicaragua.

More potent, perhaps, than the practical are the political facts. The building of the Nicaraguan canal would be perhaps the most far-reaching gesture that the United States could make toward obtaining Central American, indeed Latin American, appreciation and co-operation. It happens that the building of the canal, to which Nicaragua justly looks forward as the consummation of its commercial future, would be the greatest and most significant proof of American good faith with Nicaragua, and would justify it before its sisters in its faith and friendship for the United States. And, too, it would conceivably justify American guardianship of Nicaragua in the eyes of all Latin America, for if the Marines were there all those years to guard the site of a new canal,—well, that, as one Nicaraguan put it, "is a burro of another breed."

CHAPTER IV

HONDURAS — YELLOW HILLS

A BROAD sea, water leaden-smooth, about us. In front an endless, irregular company of sugar-loaf islands. Far away, above and beyond them, an unbroken curtain of high, shadowy mountains. Through this sea moves our ship, sailing with a majesty that is not its own, but the gift of this gorgeous setting of peaked islands and encircling distance. The gift, too, of the broad Pacific behind us, with its long swell lifting our boat, and us, forward into the unforgettable picture.

We are in the Gulf of Fonseca, one of the magnificent harbors of the world, and the half-way station of our trip through Central America. We are on our way from Corinto, Nicaragua, to Amapala, Honduras, whence we shall take our way by launch and automobile to the capital, Tegucigalpa, an eagle's eyrie on the summit of the cordillera, of those mountains which climb dimly into the sky before us.

Our ship sails on, dipping like a sailboat in the Pacific swell, bearing on between two peaked hills which open slowly before us. All about, in these tapering, steep shores, the formations are volcanic, still, as in Nicaragua, a little steeper, perhaps, but standing out as if this great harbor were itself a crater lake from the vast

prehistoric time when all Central America was cast up out of sea and fire and earth.

Myriad smaller islands appear as the great ones open, and on them all not one sign of life until, to the right, on the summit of a low hill, a rough, wooden, straw-thatched building becomes clear against a higher peaked mountain,—a lighthouse, a fort perhaps. Then, slowly it seems now, the steamer turns the point on which the lighthouse stands, and nestling at its foot lies a little town, white and pale blue,—Amapala. No harbor here, despite the magnificence of the great harbor itself. Our ship drops anchor and, in time, out comes a doctor, rowed by dusky sailors, and soon we are taken ashore, in a great, swaying lighter. We are greeted at the tiny pier by porters and by soldiers in blue denim uniforms turned white at the edges by many washings, and rifles much longer than the soldiers who carry them.

Amapala is one of the spots of which every traveler writes,—it is so typical of all they expect to find in the tropics, with its apologetic little park, its soldiers in their bare feet and their blue denim and long rifles, with its heat and squalor and gloomy brilliance of sun and sweltering shade. Then there is also the famous Hotel Morazán, which is just as it has been for thirty years—only now it is run by a Chinaman and there are electric lights in the office and in one bedroom.

A single night at Amapala, if fortune favors us, and with the dawn we are up and away. We leave by launch to go yet further into the myriad islands of the Gulf. For two hours we travel, through early morning, under a blue sky pierced by naked armies of low hills. We

pass islands covered with nesting pelicans and ducks, who fly up by hundreds into the sky when our boatman screeches his whistle. We sail through a choppy stretch of sea where the water splashes over the edge of the launch. Finally, we enter the bayous, where heavy vines hang down above us, and where we pass, close by, big schooners loaded with sacks and barrels, half sailing, half poled on their slow way,—the route of every pound of freight which enters Honduras from the Pacific.

Our port is San Lorenzo, a dingy landing-place where buses, lorries and motor cars start for Tegucigalpa, over eighty miles of winding highway. This road is one of the show features of Central America. It was built twenty years ago at a cost of $4,000,000 U.S. Cy, which works out to $50,000 a mile, although not all of that is chargeable to the road as now located. It forms a transcontinental highway, for now one travels by automobile from Tegucigalpa, the capital, to the Caribbean as well as to the Pacific, so the two roads may be called one. This road to San Lorenzo and Amapala is, however, cut in solid rock while a large proportion of the road to Puerto Cortes is through jungle-clad hills and valleys. Indeed, sixty miles of the Caribbean trip is made by railway, and about ten miles by launch across Lake Yahoa.

Starting from the Pacific side, however, we make our preparations at San Lorenzo, this tiny town of bustling garages, whitewashed tropical houses, a dingy, sleepy hotel and acres of pitilessly sunny sand, for streets and plaza. We lunch here, and in time we are

on our way, off through the flats, the volcanic cones of the islands fading behind us and, looming in front and above, the serrated horizon of upturned strata and distant mountains.

The flat country once crossed, the hills crowd quickly in upon us, the road plunges into their valleys and the coast country is suddenly behind us. Now, hills are piled on hills, the road begins to climb their sides and the view forward and back is across a tumbled, confused landscape of vast distances of golden hills, yellow with clay and limestone. Sometimes we can see to the Pacific, once there is a glimpse of Amapala, white amongst the islands. And always we see, before and behind us, this magnificent road, a veritable miracle in this superb wilderness.

Over this highway passes the life and trade of Honduras. Here are hurrying motor trucks, driven by the blond-haired, pink-cheeked American or English boys who drive motor trucks from one end of the tropics to the other, all 'round the world. Here are ox-carts, feeling their slow way—four days on the road we cover in six hours by automobile—loaded with everything, from hay to dynamite, bumping along. No more are there decorated wheels, as in Costa Rica, only five-foot rims with honest spokes, and blue canvas tops pulled over curved hoops,—and women peering out as we hurry by.

Pack trains pass all day long, the mules fitted with wooden saddles piled high with packages sewed up tightly in dried horsehide, safe against rain. A few horsemen, a few automobiles, and once the great wide

omnibus which makes the trip each way twice a week. And always the endless procession of peons and Indians with their own packs on their backs, stepping aside to let us rush on.

We pass isolated houses, huts rather, where the people live, eking out an existence herding and cultivating tiny patches,—the Honduranean is not such a confirmed town-dweller as the Nicaraguan is. Here and there are fields, or groups of cows and mules and chickens under sparse shade trees. There are two towns, only, on this eighty-mile ride, their green trees, red tiles and white walls gleaming on the yellow hillsides. Picturesque and friendly spots, with tiny plazas in front of the church, across which we drive while the whole village comes to the doors to watch us. We buy strange fruits and familiar oranges, but there is no ice, and no refreshment, excepting the endless charged water of the tropics, lukewarm.

So we find our way into the heart of Honduras, over this wonderful road through a golden wilderness. For it is the golden sand of Honduras' barren hills that contributes the yellow to the Central American rainbow. Bare and yellow they seem in the dry season, and golden against the green of foliage and farm in the wet. The figure is insistent, and the traveler carries away with him the impress of that color of promise and of significance as well. And this is whether he sees it first in the golden yellow of the bananas which are the wealth of the Caribbean coast, or here in the tumbling desert of the Pacific.

Honduras, as we look at it on the map, seems horizon-

tal (not vertical like Nicaragua) for the northern shore is almost a straight line for 300 miles east and west along the Caribbean, and the easternmost point, where the shore-line at last turns southward, again, is also the present boundary between Honduras and Nicaragua. The Spaniards (tradition says it was Columbus himself) named this point of the long-expected turn southward, "Cape Thank-God" (*Cabo de Gracias á Diós*). What a vision it gives of the patience back of those slow explorations of these endless, uncharted green jungle coasts! No need to take any more solemn explanation of the cape being so named from rescue in a storm or other fantastic tale,—surely the explorers were only glad to be going southward once more!

Place-names in Latin America give a picture of the life and of the solemn thoughts of those unimaginative conquerors. The very name of Honduras meant, undoubtedly, "wave-like," from the undulating forest-crowned hills of the coast which the Spaniards knew best,—the Caribbean. Those hills come down almost to the shore, but they break into magnificent broad valleys, characteristic, too, of the country. The fertility of many of these great spaces, their flat, well-watered bottom-lands with rains almost the year around, give in fact another reason for the yellow of the rainbow,—the golden future. As in so many other parts of Central America, one only wonders why it is not already producing the foods of the world.

The whole area of Honduras is put at 46,250 square miles, about that of the American state of New York, with the population estimated at 637,114, or 13.7 per

square mile. Thus, like all the other countries of Central America, excepting Salvador, Honduras is thinly populated, and indeed the population is actually spread fairly evenly over the whole land. The cities are few, excepting the newly important banana ports of Tela, La Ceiba, Puerto Cortés. The natives live in large proportion in isolated farmhouses scattered along the highways of the country or in the broad cattle ranges in the highland valleys. Tegucigalpa, the largest town in the country, has less than 40,000 inhabitants.

Now, we are close to Tegucigalpa on the great road. We pass wide, flat valleys, some cultivated, but most waiting still their first tilling. We pass the scene of a famous battle of past time, and the commanding rock where the great Morazán stood silent on his horse and watched the struggle. We hurry through a genial recreation resort with new adobe villas going up and old ones picturesquely decaying under vines and trellises. As the tropic twilight quickly closes in on us, we begin to pass fine, fertile little farms and "*quintas*" filled with fragrant flowers in the dim mass of trellises. Lights break out in the houses along the roadside, and more and more of such houses appear. Then comes a great long building on a hill, and an aeroplane hangar below it,—the national aviation park! Finally, against the star-lit sky, two spidery, hundred-foot towers of structural steel, —the wireless, a hundred miles from ship or railway!

Falling night adds romance and beauty, perhaps, but if our good fortune is to enter Tegucigalpa at such an hour, we can well give thanks for it. Over a low hill, down into a sloping valley, and against the dimly out-

The new bridge between Tegucigalpa and Comayaguela, Honduras, with the President's Palace in the background.

The Parish Church of Tegucigalpa, and a bit of the Square where one sits under the famous Bougainvillea trellis.

lined hill before us will gleam the thousand lights of the capital, as beautiful and as romantic a sight as could be found in many a long journey in tropic or in milder clime.

The first impression of the inland capital, when we reach it at nightfall, is of charm and welcome inexpressible. The lights become a patterned curtain as the hillside comes closer. The road sweeps us into the town of Comayaguela, the twin-city of Tegucigalpa, and carries us forward under low, thick trees, lining populated streets, filled with boys at play and old men sitting on the sidewalk pavements before lighted doorways. We cross the fine new cement bridge, with its romantic view of the terraced approach to the palace of the President. We twist through hilly, mysterious streets, and stop in a narrow way at whose end we glimpse an old church-dome.

Here we are, at last, at the hotel, and glad to descend and enter. The friendly American manager is introducing us, a moment later, to the brisk and cordial American Consul. Having accepted an invitation to call after dinner, and having met half a dozen other local Americans and English before the dust has been washed off our hands, we begin to feel that we may like this isolated capital after all! The friendliness of Honduras, of Tegucigalpa, is not, however, confined to the foreigners. They could well have learned their cordiality from the Hondurancans as much as from their own good will.

In all the rest of Central America, full as it is of charming people, we shall not find the frank directness which greets us in Honduras. The Costa Ricans we

esteem and enjoy for the fineness of their minds and the Old-World perfection of their cordiality, the Nicaraguans we find more hospitable, more understanding of us and more capable of making us understand them than are the others, and we shall admire the crisp Salvadoreans and glow to the warmth of the wonderful and wise Guatemalan welcome, but in Honduras we uncover a frankness and a sense of genuineness which completely disarm us.

Their capital is not the cleanest spot in the world, the streets are narrow and not always as beautiful by daylight as they seem at night. The working classes are sadly filthy, but all that is made up for by the patches of beauty, and by the charm of their upper classes. The plaza in the centre of the city, with its old church, its bronze statue of the national hero Morazán in plumed hat and full dress uniform, may perhaps be most memorable for the superb spreading arbor of purple bougainvillea. The two-story frame shops and arched *portales*, with wicker-furnished porches above, line one side of the plaza, and the handsome new building of the Banco de Honduras another.

All this makes us feel Tegucigalpa to be very fine and self-respecting, especially as we watch the gentlemen of the town cross and recross this plaza in their dark woolen clothes and their felt hats,—for Tegucigalpa is over 3,000 feet in the mountains and one can persuade oneself, part of the time, that it is cool. We can, some morning, follow this crowd of well-dressed men, and find ourselves in a criss-crossed mixing of streets, before a fine old church next which is an attractive entrance court—with

a road running steeply down at one side—leading into a group of old colonial buildings. Here is the hall of Congress where the great of Honduras gather to the sessions of a legislature, wisely made up of one body, in this little country.

We may wander in, too, to listen to the debates, and to look down the lines of those fine faces, for politics in Honduras tempts the best of the land to its service. The debates are sharp and eloquent, and the gallery is made up of men of every class and station, mixed-blood peasants in white blouses and straw hats, Indians with wiry hair and dark faces, sedate lawyers in dark wool clothes and black felt hats, all mingled in the arena of democracy.

There are, in Honduras, men of a hundred sorts, and yet the finest (and so the most typical) are of one sort,—a strange and perhaps unreasoning idealism seems the characteristic of this people. Revolutionists, bloody bandits (if you read the newspapers literally) and professional politicians make up the leaders, and yet behind them and working with them are these idealists, who sway the country. They are men devoted to and seeking the finer things of their land, and above all they seem devoted to one great and wonderful ideal,—the Union of the five countries of Central America.

The statue of Morazán in the plaza bears his famous words that "the only ideal worth dying for is the Union of Central America." That spirit is still as much alive in Honduras as it was when Morazán tried to force it on all Central America three generations ago. The last effort at Union was broken up in this very city in 1922,

after Honduras had arranged to withdraw its own capital to Comayagua to leave Tegucigalpa as the capital of the Union. Still these men who believe in the Union are undaunted, and as we sit with them, in their austere offices, in their quiet homes, talking, listening,—telling them frankly, too, of our own beliefs—we may touch on their deep spring of faith and hope which transcends the mere present of difficulties and problems and recent revolutions and looks beyond till it sees nothing but the goal, even if it takes a generation, or a century, to reach it.

Intense, concentrated, these men talk and dream and look back as well as forward, drawing their faith for the future from their experience and their failures, even, in the past. One, a flaming youth, such as one might hope to find in Ireland, says, intensely:

"I, with these hands, have shot at your soldiers, at your Marines invading Nicaragua. Then I hated all North Americans. But now I see that the one hope of the Union is in the United States. We look to the United States to help us to that goal, because they seek—if sometimes very badly—the good of Central America. And the Union is the great good."

We shall believe, in Tegucigalpa—and if we are wise and sanely balanced, we shall carry the memory, carefully nurtured, away with us through all the rest of our voyage through Central America. The men who here judge everything by the ideal of the Union, supporting this candidate for President at the polls, or following that revolutionist in the field without regard to his reputation or his party, but only with regard to whether his

election will aid or hinder the Union,—the men of this type sway Honduras. They travel up and down the country, not so wise in the ways of the politics of common vote-swapping as some others, perhaps, but blind to the need of knowing anything but the great ideal. It is strange, but it is Honduras. A land of idealists seeking a practical man to lead them. This is the viewpoint which greets the North American traveler, from the land of practical men always seeking an idealist!

In the classes working upwards in Honduras this psychological searching for a way, a solution, an anodyne, makes for an intensity of life rare in the tropics although not unique in Central America. It tends in Honduras to bring out in sharp relief an especial characteristic of most Central Americans, of most Latin Americans indeed. It is highly emphasized in Honduras—this interest in politics. To the typical Honduranean there is but one road to all perfection and happiness—politics. There is but one road to financial and economic stability—politics. They are in the minority who do not see that this is the way, and fewer still who seek to struggle against the stream of thought by devoting themselves to some chosen work which all their fellows believe the proper political system will achieve overnight or at most in a year or two of the type of government each considers "good."

The application of political remedies to economic ills is not confined to Honduras or to Central America. Europe and the United States have done their share and México and Russia have given differing examples of the working of the complete theory. But in Honduras and

almost as generally in all Central America they believe in it intensely. The whole intellectual energy of the country is turned to politics, and revolutionary outbreaks are little more than an exceptionally violent political manifestation.

The pressure against the limitations of ordinary living is terrific in Honduras in the periods when politics are active. Men gather in the towns to meet the leaders of their particular faction for the one and only purpose of discussing the problems of the party as if upon them alone depended the future of the world. As one man, interested in other matters, once remarked, in Tegucigalpa:

> There are only two kinds of people in Honduras, those who are active in politics and those who are trying to help the people, —and I sometimes think that I am the only one of the second kind.

The emphasis on politics and revolution in Honduras is not the fault of the people alone,—there is a potent question of geography to be taken into consideration. Honduras, like a great, sprawling child, is surrounded and confined by three countries each stronger than she is, and fairly balanced against one another. The result of Honduras's relative weakness has been that for nearly the whole period of the independence, she has been under the domination of one or the other of her neighbors, for the fortunate country controlling Honduras had an overwhelming advantage over the others.

This applies particularly to Salvador and Guatemala, long rivals, for their Presidents have, in the past, almost all fought over the control of Honduras, and have

sought, each of them, to impose their puppets as Presidents in Honduras, by revolution, by control of elections, by hidden military or financial aid at critical moments. Honduras has been the battle-ground of all their rivalries, and when, after 1898, Nicaragua also entered the lists, Honduras became a political cockpit. Of late years, and particularly since the Washington Conferences of 1907 and 1922-1923, this condition has gradually changed. The revolutions in Honduras in 1924 were thoroughly localized there, in part through the cooperation of the United States in urging that the spirit and letter of the 1923 treaties be observed by Honduras's neighbors, and in part because the outbreaks of that time had begun and been kept alive only by local and family rivalries.

The politics of Honduras has been costly enough in blood and money, wasted opportunities and interrupted progress. Yet for all that, one has a weird feeling, always, that politics and even revolutions are, in Honduras, only some extravagant form of activity in which the alert and capable Honduran mind—too good for the opportunities as yet offered by the peaceful life of the country—finds an outlet for its energies. Seeing it in this light seems to clarify much, even though it accepts, with adaptations, the traditional viewpoint of Central American fiction.

Honduras, you know, is the O. Henry country. The northern coast is the scene of most of the incidents of the Central American stories of the great American humorist. There the marvelous "Vesuvius Company" of O. Henry took its name and many incidents (at least

the less gaudy incidents) from the romantic story of the Vacarro Brothers, two young Italians who are said to have started at the very practical bottom of the banana business in New Orleans. Their organization has now grown to the second or third greatest of the fruit companies with its own steamers and a romance worthy to its minutest detail of the picturesque American author.

But it all helps to give the setting. One Honduran official in Washington once recommended his country with the assurance that the traveler could not tell the difference between the north coast of Honduras and towns in the United States! It was not so much of a recommendation as he meant it to be, but the fact is that in many ways the frame houses and the bustle, if not the beauty, of the fruit towns and the busy, frontier atmosphere of some of the rapidly growing cities of northern Honduras do give one the idea of the boom town of America's Middle West. As a final touch, there is enough English spoken to please the most provincial tourist, what between the Jamaica Negroes, the American fruit company employees, and the picturesque group of fortune and concession hunters.

Back from the littoral of the coast, back indeed from the banana groves, with their almost exotic prosperity (so detached it seems from the countries in which it thrives) is agricultural Honduras proper. It is a land of sugar possibilities, and in fact produces about eleven million pounds of sugar a year—worth half of the value of the ten million bunches of bananas which Honduras raises in the same period. It is also a cattle country. It is breeding only now, but with herds estimated at half

a million head and with much potential grazing land, it seems capable of becoming a fattening country and even a producer of chilled meat for the foreign market. It is a tobacco country; good tobacco badly cured goes out from Honduras to supply all Central America. It is something of a coffee country, but largely by courtesy, for its production is small compared with the other four nations of the Isthmus. Last, it is a mining country, one great silver mine having been in operation for thirty years, with a total production of some $16,000,000 U.S. Cy. to date, and with gold placers, prospects and lesser camps scattered through the mountains. And, last, it is a timber country, producing some of the finest mahogany in the world, although mahogany cutting is an industry of virgin land, not a permanent asset, nor, perhaps, a great corporation's game.

One of the problems of Honduras is foreign corporations. There are three fruit companies. The United, by its long momentum, is the greatest of all. The other two are about equal. There is the Cuyamel, which has not only its fruit business and steamers but much of the sugar industry of which it is the particular patron. The other is Vacarro Brothers, who have in addition to their fruit business and steamers the Banco Atlántida, probably the most important financial institution in the country. Each of the fruit companies has a railway, Vacarro Brothers operate 105 miles in from the port of La Ceiba, the Cuyamel has a 33-mile line from the port of Omóa, and the United has the 122-mile long Tela Railroad and the 37-mile long Trujillo Railroad, running from the ports of those names inland.

These three great interests, with their manifest and varied problems, make very clear to any one the temptation, at any rate, which there must be to manipulate government. This is seldom in Central America, and certainly never in Honduras, a temptation which a corporation is allowed to fight out alone in the closet, as it were, of its directors' room. The history of Honduras is of course crowded with examples of meddling foreigners. Most Honduran governments and the aspiring candidates of tomorrow all seek corporation support, invite it, promise all imaginable favors. When the Government in power needs money (which is almost always) it asks loans from the Fruit Companies. When those canny citizens (they are usually canny, even if they sometimes succumb to official importunities) refuse, then they are urged to pay in advance the import duties on the supplies they will bring into the country during the next six months or a year.

When there is an election, the word is whispered that this or that man is the "United" candidate, or the "Cuyamel" or the "Vacarro" candidate. There is literally no surcease, and excepting for the fact that experience has taught the companies that trouble and not ease follows any mixing in politics, the situation would perhaps grow to be all imagination can picture or an O. Henry describe. Once the government, present or prospective, is in the debt of a corporation or a group, however, it is said to be more than likely to put that corporation on its blacklist. The cynical minded note this and decide that it is because this special company or group can not be looked to for anything more for the present, but

there is far more than this back of the complicated manifestations of Honduran government psychology.

There is, primarily, the skeptical attitude toward foreign finance which is deeply grounded on the long history of misfortune in Honduras's foreign loans. The bare details of these ventures into high finance would be comical if they had not been so great a tragedy. Honduras, since her earliest days, has dreamed of the railway crossing the country from Atlantic to Pacific (a matter of only two hundred miles) and between the years 1867 and 1871 she offered, in London, four 6-per-cent to 10-per-cent loans, at a total par value of over £5,000,000. The bonds sold at from 80 per cent down to 20 per cent of their face value and virtually all the sales made, with the exception of enough to build sixty miles of railway and £2,000 in cash (all the money that reached Tegucigalpa) were eaten up in the "selling costs" and other expenses of the loan in London!

The whole matter was a sensational scandal and was the subject of a long Parliamentary investigation, but the fact remains that Honduras bonds were, until 1925, outstanding to a total, with accrued interest, of £29,000,000, represented in Honduras by a railway line sixty miles long with a replacement valuation of perhaps £400,000. Innumerable efforts were made, since 1872, when the bonds went to default, to settle the matter, and the American State Department's plan to induce the great house of J. P. Morgan & Co. of New York to go into Honduras in 1910 was based on an arrangement for the British to turn in their bonds at 15 per cent of their face value and thus redeem them for rather less

than Honduras got out of the sale (with interest to date). The figure was based on a careful estimate of the sum Honduras would be able to carry, and these terms of 1910 came up from time to time in discussing settlements, and were, in fact, the basis of the ultimate agreement reached by both parties in 1925, with arrangements for its payment by stamp taxes on consular invoices.

The details of present-day Honduran financial relationships are too ephemeral and too complicated to be detailed here, and the 1924 revolutions have added a staggering burden. In fact it is only the accumulated floating debts of Honduras, always increased and never lessened by revolutions or policies, added to the advances made by the fruit companies, which virtually eat up, in advance, now, the various banana revenues, that constitute the present fiscal problem of Honduras.

The problem does not, however, end there. Other phases insist on intruding and upsetting all merely logical plans of adjustment. Of these, the most persistent, or omnipresent, is the national currency. That is, if it can be called national. Honduras is the last of the Central American countries to enjoy the mixture of all the demonetized silver coins of Latin America which once furnished all of these picturesque lands with their circulating medium. The others have gone over to gold,—or to paper. In Honduras alone do you spend American dollars, Peruvian *soles*, Méxican *pesos*, demonetized Nicaraguan *pesos*, Guatemalan silver which does not circulate in Guatemala, and even certain repudiated coins of Chile, Bolivia and Ecuador. In Honduras you find

them all, along with a few well-worn English shillings. Every expedition into the marts of trade requires a mental exchange table. Incidentally, too, one needs an eagle eye, as, for instance, the old Nicaraguan twenty-cent piece is exactly the size of a twenty-five cent piece of half a dozen other nationalities, and a neat profit of the tradesman is achieved when he passes off as twenty-five cent pieces a stack of these, with a Peruvian or Guatemalan quarter-*peso* on either end, in change for a good American bill.

Officially, Honduras is on a silver basis, the local peso being worth its bullion value in silver, usually taken as about forty-seven cents American money. Which would complicate matters, except for the fact that in trade we visitors are always expected to spend American bank-notes and to receive Honduran paper as change,—so there is no discussion in the matter. We accept the Honduran bills at two for one and, unable to spend them, we deposit them in the bank or sell there at the day's exchange!

Incidentally, however, the Banco Atlántida, the enterprising American institution backed by the Vacarro Brothers, circulates its paper with a printed surcharge pledging to redeem it at two *pesos* for one American dollar, which places it at an advantage in that this money circulates freely on the Caribbean coast, where the silver-standard notes of the Banco de Honduras, the official institution, do not, as the trade of the Caribbean ports and the banana territories is in American money—both ways.

During the Great War, when silver was at a high pre-

mium, it was suggested by American currency experts, amongst others, that Honduras then make the change to a gold standard, calling in the silver, on the exportation of which there was a legal interdiction, and the government selling it abroad for prices more than enough to pay for the conversion. This was exactly what Salvador did, in reaching her present gold basis, but there were those in Honduras who feared the "wrong" people would make a profit, so the plan was killed.

In spite of such difficulties or perhaps just because of the resultant independence of the foreigner in the midst of the national uncertainties, Honduras is progressing. As much or more foreign capital is entering Honduras, even despite revolutions, as into any other of the Central American countries. The investment of the fruit companies is said to represent $20,000,000 U.S. Cy., that of the mining companies another $2,000,000, of miscellaneous other foreign investments another $5,000,000. This must increase and improve, and if this money has entered under the ægis of the uncertain conditions of recent years in Honduras, much more should apparently come, and more gladly, when the problems she faces are solved in a way encouraging to national individuality and stability.

That is the golden promise of the rainbow, of the golden heart of the rainbow which is Honduras's place in it. It is tangible, it is very real, for the wealth of possibilities is there, and the inevitable need for the creation of that sounder basis for the future presses in ways which Honduras must inevitably accept and the outside world approve.

CHAPTER V

SALVADOR — GREEN VALLEYS

SALVADOR,[1] like its place in the symbolic rainbow of Central America, is almost eternal green. Salvador is tiny, and is clasped in a cup formed by Honduras and Guatemala, yet in many ways it is peculiarly isolated and unique. And in none more than in this endless green of its landscape. Even in the months when its neighbors accept the brown raiment of their annual drought, Salvador is as green as a salt marsh in an autumn landscape of the north. So exotic is the contrast that, to the traveler from Honduras or Nicaragua, Salvador suggests from the first more the semblance of late August in some temperate-zone farming country than the tropics at their season of rest. It is as if it were a pocket of New England hills that had been lifted up bodily on a summer day, and set down here in the tropics to bloom on, unchanging, through the endless noon.

Nature has been prodigal throughout all Central America, but nowhere in all the countries has she poured forth so much richness in so small an area. Salvador

[1] The usual Anglicized form is this, but officially the name of the country is "El Salvador." The name of the capital city is "San Salvador" always.

is fifth in size but second in commercial importance. While the others have greater acreages of tropical seacoast, broader table-lands for coffee *fincas*, and finer lakes and rivers, probably no other has so much of each in so confined an area as has Salvador.

Salvador lies wholly on the Pacific side of the Isthmus, the only country of Central America which has no Atlantic coast-line. Almost rectangular in shape, it is a scant 150 miles east and west and about fifty miles north and south, but with an area of 13,176 square miles. The longest side lies along the Pacific ocean, a little north of the thirteenth parallel, while to the east the great arm of the Pacific which forms the Gulf of Fonseca gives Salvador one excellent harbor. Clear across the northern boundary is a rugged section of Honduras,—through whose territory, however, Salvadoreans dream of some day building a railway of their own to the Caribbean. From the west comes the railway connecting Salvador with the Caribbean through Guatemalan territory via Zacapa and Puerto Barrios. As finished in 1927, this section of the International Railways of Central America is the first connection by rail of any two of the Central American countries. The length of Salvador is traversed by the International Railways from La Unión on the Gulf of Fonseca to the connection with the Guatemalan division at the border. There is also the older Salvador Railway Company, whose line runs from San Salvador, the capital, to Acajutla, at the northwestern end of the country.

Running the length of Salvador, also, is another exotic phenomenon,—a row of volcanoes that sit, for

the most part, like small boys' sand-piles on the top of what were once well-tilled farm-lands. Six of these volcanoes reach a considerable height (from 4,000 to 7,000 feet) and virtually all of them have appeared in historic time. To the very edge of the lava wastes which run out like spurs from the mountains, the fields are green, maize grows or cattle graze, and where the lava rocks grow thinner, fine trees have pushed their way up through their crust. The volcanoes themselves are always beautiful, and, as a matter of fact, actually neither caused great concern to the country nor harmed it seriously. On the contrary, volcanic ashes and dust are notably fertile and many a coffee *finca*, "ruined" by a volcanic eruption, has sprung up the following year, immensely improved by its shower of potash-laden dust.

But soil is not all in Salvador, for water supply and climate combine with it to make fertility effective and continuous. In Salvador's small confines is the finest river on the Pacific slope of Central America, the Lempa, which rises in Guatemala, passes through Honduras and then winds through Salvador for some 125 miles. Other fair-sized streams and half a dozen beautiful lakes promise both irrigation and power development. As for climate, Salvador has the advantages of the tropics, such as a dependable rainy season from May to November, and a limited variation in temperature. The pocket-like environment conduces, apparently, to an evenness and a steadiness of wind and weather that keep the atmosphere at a mildness which suggests, over and over again, the temperate zone.

Today the agricultural wealth of Salvador is ex-

pressed in the one chief crop of all Central America, coffee, and in two unique specialties, balsam and indigo. The coffee totals about $12,000,000 U.S. Cy. annually; the balsam (still sent to market as "Balsam of Perú," although Perú never produced a pound of this precious healing balm, but bought and transshipped it from Salvador in colonial days) a quarter of a million dollars a year and the indigo as much. Steadily, in recent years, however, the food exports have pushed their way forward, sugar, $1,320,000, U.S. Cy., rice, $250,000, potatoes as high as $114,000 a year. Salvador has in its soil and climate the making of success in almost any field of agriculture, and should the promised change over to food crops come, its fields will bear even more semblance to the farmlands of the north, with maize and wheat on the highlands, rice, sugar and maize, again—enough to feed a dozen Salvadors—in the lowlands.

Of all Salvador's advantages, however, perhaps the greatest is its stock of labor, and unexpectedly efficient labor. The first astonishing discovery made by the traveler is that fact that Salvador is, practically, the most densely populated country on the Western hemisphere. It has, officially, 1,525,000 inhabitants in an area of 13,176 square miles (34,000 square kilometers), that is, 120 to the square mile (38 per square kilometer); relatively few nations in the world are more densely inhabited. Besides this, Salvador's population is spread over the whole country, not gathered into cities. Thus, while San Salvador has some 80,000 inhabitants, Santa Ana 59,817, San Miguel 30,406, and eight other towns over 15,000 each, the rural population is still 75 per

cent of the total number of inhabitants. This results, logically, in Salvador's having in addition to the densest population in the Americas, by far the most of its people living on the soil,—say 90 rural residents to the square mile. The natural result is a remarkably high proportion of land under cultivation.

It takes no columns of statistics to convince the traveler that Salvador's soil is intensively cultivated. Through mile after mile of country one passes cultivated farms, coffee plantations, wide pastures and crowded villages. The most casual tourist on the New York-San Francisco boats has, moreover, an opportunity to see the busy interior of Salvador. Automobiles bring passengers on through ships up from the port of La Libertad, one hour's ride over a fine highway, to spend a few hours in San Salvador, the capital. The wise traveler can do even more than that and still continue on his boat. Some of the ships touch at all three of the Salvador ports. The two or three days thus consumed could all be spent by the passenger within the country, which can be seen from the railway train to a most refreshing degree of satisfaction if not of thoroughness.

So, if we are lucky and intelligent (and no matter how long or short our stay) we enter Salvador at the port of La Unión at the extreme eastern end and leave at Acajutla, at the far western corner. Via steamer, we are landed at the concrete pier at Cutuco, the freight terminus of La Unión, at the end of the recently completed railway. If we come by launch, across the Gulf of Fonseca from Nicaragua or Honduras, we land at the much shallower, older port of La Unión itself, a

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spot of historic and picturesque interest,—and the popular resort of most of the mosquitoes of Central America!

Either way, it is at the station of La Unión that we take train for San Salvador,—again a day-long ride. The train, moreover, starts at 6 A. M., so the traveler on a through ship must count on the possible loss of a full day at La Unión, if he has not arrived (and landed) the night before.

Rising at 5 A. M. is not difficult in La Union, where all the world is well astir with the dawn. We take our way up streets paved with round cobblestones. We cross a lovely plaza on one side of which is a long, columned barracks, with dingy soldiers and, by contrast, the smartest officers in Central America, silently eyeing us. We walk along under the eaves of picturesque houses, and by many turns come to the railway station. Here is much business and excitement.

The "expressman" has brought our trunks and valises, by ox-cart, magically from the custom-house to the train in ample time. A strenuous youth weighs them, he and a hopeful and unnecessary assistant load them on the train, and we find our seats, and soon our way into the heart of Salvador.

The train (like all in Central America) is three-foot narrow-guage, with double seats on either side of the aisle, and there are no parlor cars, as in Nicaragua. But the railway was not finished until 1920, the cars are new and clean, the road-bed the best in Central America, and the locomotive which draws us a modern and well handled oil-burner. Moreover, we are off on time—one of the pleasing things about trains in most of Central

America is that they start (and usually arrive) on time, shattering all tropical traditions.

We are in the jungle before the last houses of La Unión are behind us. The tropical forest is not a world of palm-trees and giant ferns and bamboos, but a universe of green—tall trees with spreading tops, their long trunks covered with mosses and vines and immense foliage plants to their very tops. The dank bush at their feet is green, too,—unbelievably green and fresh. The bits of jungle here in Salvador, for all the farms and the suggestion of the temperate zone, are the first real jungle we have seen from train windows, a fact doubtless due to the newness of this railway line.

Soon this phase passes. The country becomes relatively treeless, and the degree of cultivation, as our eyes continuously telegraph our wondering brain, is very great indeed; seldom a quarter of an hour passes without our emergence into some lovely broad plain, dotted with cultivated fields. Yet the tropics are never without their mark, for the fences of these farms are Spanish bayonet or the long, spiny "organ" cactus or, more characteristic still, those strange growing fence-posts that are one of the minor wonders of these luxurious lands.

Soon the volcanoes begin, towering high above the train, and at San Miguel coming down to the very track itself with the ugly black cinder waste-land. Then the lakes,—sometimes one which seems merely a marsh on the level of the train and again, in magnificent distances below the track, gleaming blue mirrors between steep green hills.

For now we are beginning to climb. New bits of al-

most English countryside follow, with stone fences and trees that seem surely elm or beech or oak, not the tall, paint-brush trees of the tropics. These are the farms, large and small (the numbers of tiny patches prove how many are the individual farms) where foods are grown to supply the coffee plantations and for export to the other countries of Central America. The coffee country does not begin until we are close on San Salvador, for coffee grows well only at altitudes above 2,500 feet. There, too, there will be many individual properties, for the Salvadoreans are happy in the bits of land that they can come to own.

These Salvadoreans are crowding about us now, inside the car and outside, alert, interested and none too considerate. At every village they crowd their doorways to look at us or push into the aisles of the train (with or without friends to whom to bid good-bye) not overly clean, to be sure, but frankly curious about us—and the train.

The types of travelers are infinite, and more reassuring than the station visitors. They range from dignified countrymen who are careful not to display their provincialism by word or deed, to solemn seminary boys in cassocks and wide hats, and fine old ladies with black shawls over their delicately embroidered, trailing white linen gowns. And when, seated at the long bench in the second-class car, we blissfully enjoy the best of tropical country cooking, served on a fresh green banana-leaf, our peace with everything Salvadorean becomes quite complete.

Outside the car windows, still, the wonderful pano-

rama unrolls. Over and over again we exclaim that all this is a perfect tropical garden. In places, every inch of land has yielded to human hands,—as the Salvadoreans boast. In others the scattered grass and trees indicate not a tropical profusion but a land restrained, rich chiefly from human energy and cultivation.

It is a country worthy of a great people. Yet nature has done so much,—it could almost have made a people great in spite of themselves. One wonders, looking out at these luxurious fields, if men do not too often credit to themselves too many of the things that nature has done for them. Certainly no mere humanity can justly take sole credit for any land being the gem that this land is. The glorying of the Salvadoreans should be first in the glories that a bountiful Deity has seen fit to pour forth upon them.

We come to like Salvador; one cannot escape its charm. We love its jewel-like beauty. We admire it for the very wealth the Salvadoreans hold so wisely and so tightly in their own hands, in their countryside, and in their proud little cities, with their pressed-iron churches and their reinforced concrete government buildings, and their rows of wood-and-pressed-iron one-story homes, soundly earthquake-proof, as becomes wise and cautious Salvadoreans. We come to admire the dirty but well-knit laborers, the patient artisans in woodwork, saddlery and iron, the women at their native looms, and the precious things they make. And we appreciate the clean-cut upper classes, wearing their New York and London clothes in the glare of the tropic midday in San Salvador, greeting us in their beautiful clubs with the

merry self-assurance that comes only from the great world, and teaching us (expensively) the newest form of bridge a year before it is heard of in New York.

The upper classes of Salvador have maintained the supremacy of the native aristocracy more thoroughly, in some ways, than have their kinsmen in the other countries. Their adaption to modern conditions has resisted the encroachment of foreign capital, and not only do Salvadoreans control all the desirable agricultural properties of the country, but most of the banks and such manufacturing industries as there are. They have turned themselves to whatever type of progress their conditions called for, such as that adaptation of pressed iron to an earthquake country before reinforced concrete presented its potent claims, and then the adoption of concrete years before most other countries felt justified in doing so. When they flatter the visitor from the United States the Salvadoreans call themselves "The Yankees of Central America."

The class divisions in Salvador are sharply marked, and the lower classes are far below the upper, yet both have an energy and driving force that are nationally characteristic. The lower classes are apparently well able, also, to take care of themselves in small business, and the percentage of small holdings of farms and tiny coffee "estates" is as high, almost, as in Costa Rica. It is estimated that 75 per cent of the coffee of Salvador is raised on properties held by small landowners of the low and lower middle classes.

These lower-class Salvadoreans seem, indeed, more purposeful, more intent on accomplishment, than simi-

lar classes of the other countries, less humanly "*simpático*" as the Spanish word has it, but commanding genuine respect. However, these Salvadorean workmen are famous for an addiction to alcohol so thorough-going that, for instance, the liquor taxes furnish the government nearly a quarter of its total revenue. Drinking is so wide-spread that it is recognized in official reports as a "nation-wide disease," which the government has only begun the slow preparatory work for some day eliminating by official means. It has distinctive phases, however. The Salvadorean, even in the lower classes, is a person of very decided preferences and much practical wisdom. He drinks from choice, as a rule, and gets drunk by accident—paradoxes of the problem which are subtle but important. Prohibition could be put into effect perhaps with less difficulty than the casual observer would believe. The Salvadorean laborer works on water, not alcohol, on water in the gourd which he carries swung over his shoulder,—alcohol is reserved for relaxation and celebration.

No phases of the national life of Salvador are more significant than those connected with the workers. Salvador is rich in labor,—alone of all Central America it has a surplus of capable and willing hands. On the farms of Salvador, the regular worker is paid 50 centavos silver (25 cents U.S. Cy.) a day, with food for himself but not for his family, although he is given a corn-patch to cultivate for his own account in his off-time. In the coffee season the payment averages 50 centavos the quintal (100 lbs.) of berries picked, with food, a figure at which a man or woman can make one to two

pesos ($.50 to $1 U. S. Cy.) a day, and rations. The children who help, picking up the berries which have fallen to the ground and from the lower branches, are given half rations. As in all Central America, the coffee-picking season, in November and December, is a great festival time, when city servants and the town workers who can get away flock to the plantations to live (amid not always exemplary conditions) and to store up a comfortable purse of "pocket money" for the return home.

The bulk of the labor of the picking season, however, comes from the small landowners and their families. These independent Salvadoreans, if they are coffee raisers, finish their own picking first, and then go, with their wives and children, to work on one of the big *fincas* near at hand, where they have worked, perhaps, through every picking season for generations. There they join the volunteers who have come out from the towns, and also another class like themselves, small farmers who raise other crops than coffee, but who come in to work on the *fincas* through the picking season. Coffee is one of the most rigidly seasonal crops in the world, and must be picked within a few days of ripening to be at its best. The abundance of volunteer labor available when it is needed most is actually increasing as more and more food crops are put in, and is of inestimable value to the large coffee planters of Salvador.

Most of the work of Salvador is done, one comes to feel, by its independent farmers,—in their off-time! On railway construction, even, they furnish the bulk of the workers, and railway building, along with almost every-

thing else in Salvador, is virtually suspended at such seasons as the fortnight of the first rains, when the maize must be planted, during another fortnight in August when the "*veranillo*" or dog-days (a brief dry period) calls for cleaning, and again at the harvest. Nothing is more important than the crops that each individual Salvadorean has on his mind. It is said (with that touch of humor whose force is in its inherent truth) that while revolutions in other countries start with fifty men and reach the capital with 5,000, in Salvador they may start with more than fifty, but if they must march to the capital they arrive with five; there is always something to be done to the crops which is far more important to the other forty-five revolutionists than the "rescue" of their country from a momentary "tyrant."

The basis for the small landowning class goes back only a generation. The former communal land was distributed only about 1900 to the Indians and the mixed-breed natives who had held it in communal title since the Spaniards. At the same time all laws providing any means of collecting moneys "loaned" or advanced to laborers were repealed and every legal basis of peonage wiped out. The direct result was the creation of this group of small land-owners of the lower classes, and the system of free labor that has come to be so important a part of the prosperity and stability of the country.

The love of the soil and the instinct to farm and to own a bit of ground is not confined to any one portion of the Salvadorean population. Land is the most approved investment of the upper classes, and in every rank of the lower classes the same instinct appears. In

fact, it would be easy indeed (although the Salvadorean government and the planters would hardly welcome it) to colonize the great spaces of Honduras, when that wonderful empire is really open, with Salvadoreans. Thousands have already gone to the Caribbean coast to work with the American companies, and many of these, and others, would have stopped en route to take up Honduran land if the opportunities were presented to them.

Salvador's dense population and its desire to own land promises, indeed, one of the real solutions of the problem of developing Central America, for colonization is the ideal instrument and the Salvadorean is the ideal colonist there. It is said that since the opening of the International Railway to La Unión the properties along the road have mostly been taken up in little patches by the thrifty types of natives. The traveler has no difficulty in discerning this, for the bright red tiles on the houses indicate new dwellings (and new residents); a tile roof can not be aged to its soft brown by any means but the direct attentions of sun and rain.

The Salvadorean's racial strains explain many of his characteristics. As in the rest of Central America, the bulk of the population is a mixture of Spanish and Indian, and in Salvador with no Negro blood. There are a few full-blooded Indians, but they are generally scattered through the mass of the population. A few Indian villages which remain are in fact relatively modernized. It is an amusing turn of the tables that much of the independent labor that works for extra high wages at picking time comes from the Indian communities where the aborigines have their own huts and their own

bits of farm land. Thus the "civilized" Indian of Salvador holds himself at a higher value than his mixed-blood cousin. Indians in a tribal state, such as abound in Guatemala, are seldom found in Salvador.

On the Spanish side, the racial origin of the Salvadoreans is limited to two great types. The Spanish leaders drew largely from the people of their own provinces for their supporters in the conquest of America and these soldiers, once settled, naturally drew the later colonial immigrants from their home villages. This custom accounts, in part at least, for the energetic type of Salvadorean. Estremadura was the original home of "stout Cortez" and of many of the soldiers who fought beside him in Spanish America, while from Andalucia came many of the other adventurers. Estremadura has always furnished types of famous substantiality and pride, and Andalucia, dreamy and brilliant, well accounts for the intellectual side of the Salvadorean character.

These Spanish types, and the character which they have stamped on the country, virtually dominate the life and thought of Salvador, and it is almost as if there had never been an Indian strain (excepting for the dark skins of the working classes) to mark the country for anything but an off-shoot of Estremadura and Andalucia. Naturally honest and serious, the Salvadoreans are at the same time impulsive in ways that continually take us off our guard. They are interested in novelty to an extent that is promising but has the correlative difficulty that a new plan may drive the old one away before it has come to fruition. It is typified in the industry of

the workers, when they work, and in their devotion to drink when they do not work; by the new crops, like silk and cotton, which are tried but seldom fully acclimated; by the national plans for great industrial development, launched but too often abandoned before they are accomplished; by the public spirit that builds beautiful cities and yet leaves the lower classes in filth and misery.

This people has built, however, a country of charm and beauty and color, a finished capital, and cities of character and importance. It has built, too, a life urbane, charming and unique, a world of lovely country places (since farms abound), resorts on the edges of fair mountain lakes, and colorful properties reaching in long, narrow, green plots up the sides of picturesque volcanoes.

San Salvador, the capital city, is one of the gems of Central American towns, and probably the most modern of its capitals. It is set in a beautiful circlet of hills, volcanic cones of many sizes, rising above the houses. Within half an hour of the main plaza we can reach, by motor, a dozen of the finest and most extensive of the coffee plantations. They lie along roads lined with suburban villas, and through miles of their coffee trees one climbs to the lovely suburb of Santa Tecla. This picturesque village is a bit of old colonial life left unspoiled and unchanged for a century or more. Its long, low houses, its shops with rhythmically arched *portales*, edge the most beautiful of old parks, stately with Royal palms, the most wonderful of all tropical trees.

San Salvador boasts of the handsomest modern build-

Earthquake insurance in Salvador. This Cathedral of Santa Ana is built of wood and pressed iron, from its "cornerstone" to the tip of its imposing towers.

An impressive view of the reinforced concrete National Palace in San Salvador.

ing in Central America, the big reinforced concrete National Palace. This covers a whole city block and its imposing architecture has already proven its substantiality in its ability to withstand earthquakes. San Salvador now has many well-paved streets, traversed by modern, two-deck motor buses. It has a dozen metropolitan city squares, with fine monuments and flanked by imposing churches.

The latter are of a type of earthquake-proof construction that is at first sight surprising in buildings so pretentious, for their framework, to the spires themselves, is of wood, the exterior of sheet iron pressed and hammered into forms which give all the appearance and even the grace of carved stone. It is a construction highly preferable to masonry in an earthquake country, and only recently displaced in popularity by reinforced concrete. This wood-and-iron type of building is still one of the characteristics of the private houses of all Salvador, for the homes of many of the wisest and finest of the old families are safely, and artistically, of the same excellent material. Only in very recent years, since the erection of the concrete National Palace and the concrete American legation has the new type of building become common, and now two handsome clubs, a theatre, office buildings and a number of other fine buildings attest its growing popularity.

But San Salvador is not all of Salvador, even in an urban sense. To the west is Santa Ana, most conservative, precise and business-like of Central American cities, and to the east are San Miguel and San Vicente, fine old towns, now bustling with the newly acquired

modernity of the railway. The town life of Salvador is a very strong side of the national psychology, not because a large or even a normal proportion of the people are town dwellers, but because those who create public opinion love the cities and had rather see the cities great and imposing than know that all the villages were clean and all the farms model homes for labor.

This pride in the towns is itself partially the cause of the great desire of Salvador to become, at some no distant date, one of the industrial centres of Latin America. The very beginnings of such an industrialism are quite uncreated, and yet Salvador believes in it, talks of it, plans for it. She bases it, of course, first on her surplus population, which is already emigrating, and which the country feels it could retain with national industries like cotton weaving or machinery making or what not. There is, too, the general belief that water-power development in Salvador offers great opportunity to capital.

The day of that industrialism may well come, but meanwhile all Salvador's relations to the outside world have been scaled to its growing importance as one of the great tropical agricultural countries. Its cities are agricultural cities, the railways which cross its territory tap agricultural zones. The older line, the British-owned Salvador Railway, was laid down for the purpose of transporting coffee to seaboard and the newer line of the International Railways of Central America runs through a territory which grew to important proportions as an agricultural community years before a railway was dreamed of. All of the country's 250 miles of railway and estimated 1,500 miles of cart roads work

outward to open and make available the richness of a territory essentially agricultural.

This is the Salvador the world knows and admires. It is the Salvador to which the world's financial support has been directed, when it has needed it. There is no better risk, financially, than a farm, or a country whose prosperity is based soundly on agriculture. Salvador is now on a gold basis, and its unit of currency (the *colón*) is worth fifty cents U.S. Cy. A paper currency circulates at par, maintained by adequate reserves in the banks, which are allowed to issue their own bills under strict charters. Salvador, in fact, has never had a depreciated currency, and the conversion of the old silver standard to gold was made in 1919, when silver was at its highest war premium. The melting down and export of nearly $1,000,000 U.S. Cy. worth of silver coins more than paid the costs of conversion. However, the country was for a time without a sufficient circulating medium of silver subsidiary coins, which was made up (inadequately) by the use of nickel coins of large denominations. But the banks are solid, the government is in a position to back its own nickel tokens, and from the viewpoint of the outsider all goes well in Salvador.

Indeed, the national credit has always been fundamentally sound, but during the Great War the Salvador government, moving along lines which it felt justified in following, paid the coupons on the old British debt with deferred interest bonds and in 1921 went into default for the interest on both the original bonds and those which had paid the previous interest. In the

meantime, however, the subsidies to the railways were paid, a fine new road built from San Salvador to La Libertad, and more public works carried through than ever before in Salvadorean history,—while the service on the foreign debt was allowed to lapse. The explanation was frankly made that all the other countries of the world were just then having moratoriums, so why could not Salvador! The British holders of the bonds allowed the coupon dates to pass, although under their contracts they always had a right to step in and collect the customs revenues for the loan service. Out of the situation there arose, between the Salvador government and the money markets of the world, a question as to just what was and was not sound finance.

In 1921 Salvador found it necessary to seek abroad a loan to pay this back interest, to provide funds for the subsidy for the remainder of the International Railway (giving the direct outlet to the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic through Guatemala) to settle a luxuriant floating debt and to put in a much needed sewage system and paving in San Salvador. When this proposition was presented to the world, however, Salvador was shocked to find that no bankers would touch it on any which Salvador considered fair terms. The reason was of course at base the previous apparently deliberate default, but Salvador did not take kindly to what it felt was an unjustified reflection.

The facts of the case were faced and solved, finally, by a group of men who saw beyond Salvador's injured pride. Those interested in the International Railways (the great dream of connecting the United States, all the

Central American countries and Panamá by rail) wished to complete the connection between Guatemala and Salvador. The cost was quite out of proportion to the prospective traffic returns, so the Salvadorean government subsidy was vital. This was the chief motive that induced the elements interested in the railway to assume the floating of the $19,500,000 U.S. Cy. Salvador loan, finally completed in 1923; the issue was in the end underwritten completely on the sole credit of the railways. The study given the problem by these interests brought about the development of the most practical plan yet devised for guaranteeing both good faith and the steady payment of interest and amortization by countries whose ability to pay is beyond question but whose continued willingness to pay is not so clearly proven.

The plan as finally adopted and officially ratified put into power in Salvador an American representative of an American bank as fiscal agent. The agent sells the only coupons that are good for the payment of 70 per cent of the export and import duties, while Salvador collects these coupons in payment for that portion of the duties, and, in cash, the 30 per cent balance. From the funds he has gathered the fiscal agent settles his current account for the loan, turning over the balance to the government. In this way the onus (as Salvador would regard it) of a foreigner as collector-general of customs is obviated, and the security is equally good.

The accomplishment of the 1923 loan had an important secondary effect, of far-reaching influence. For this loan was the first tangible aid which Salvador considered it had ever had from North Americans. It was,

then, the first break in the clouds of an era of long distrust of both the citizens and government of the great neighbor in the north. Salvador has not been openly hostile to American business or American tourists, and its record of relations with them is quite above criticism, but it has never had the warmth of welcome for Americans which they could feel in other countries of Central America. The loan which Salvador could regard as a first proof of American friendship had much to do with the change of attitude which followed.

What, now, is the visible future of this land of paradoxes and contradictions, and of this people who are prone to look down at their resentments more often than up at their green hills of hope? On the social side, Salvador has made sound beginnings, and these are the foundations in Salvador, as elsewhere, of real progress. For education and public sanitation, Salvador has made excellent efforts,—its desire to rank always as a modern state serves its people well in this. The work of the International Health Board in combating hook-worm has never seemed so needed as in Salvador, and never was it done so well as under the able American doctors who secured in Salvador the largest proportion of native assistance, financial and otherwise, of any country in Central America. But already the work is largely Salvadorean and the progress of the fight against this much feared intestinal parasite is being ably carried on with native money and by native scientists.

In education, the statistics are promising. A total of 887 primary schools and 1628 teachers with 50,205 children in attendance, marks a great step in spreading

education amongst the masses. This is only a drop in the bucket, for the estimated population shows 250,000 children of school age—and only 50,000 in school. But for all that, it is the best record in Central America, and probably the most accurately reported.

So much for the start upon the road. Salvador will find its way—none who knows the country can fail to admire its capabilities, the beauty of the wonderful territory that it enjoys, and the virtues, through everything, of its working classes as well as of its capable aristocracy.

The green of the spectrum stands for wisdom and good faith, and these Salvador has (in potentiality) in wonderful degree. The rainbow bends across the skies, and it could not be rainbow without its band of green. Central America needs Salvador, just as it is today, and into the unity of tomorrow the green of its fields and of its character will blend. And Salvador needs its sister lands, little though its people think so, to give it the support, to give it the excuse for being itself, and for leading along the roads where it can lead, to a better understanding and appreciation of the friends who can help them all.

CHAPTER VI

GUATEMALA — BLUE GARDENS

GUATEMALA is crowned with a rim of blue volcanoes, its lakes are blue mirrors, and its cultivated fields tinge the landscape with the blue of fruits and flowers. Thus the azure of the spectrum of Central America comes, at last, in the riches and the beauty of the lovely eldest of the five rainbow sisters.

Guatemala is the second largest of the five countries, and its population is by far the greatest.[1] Yet it is a baby amongst the nations of the earth, a child as altogether charming as if it were consciously the favorite daughter of all the world. It does not seek to intrigue us, nor does it try to give us the things of life to which it thinks we are accustomed, as Salvador does so urbanely. But Guatemala is gracious and contented, like a well-bred child, to be itself, to travel its own road, to find its own joys and to fulfil as best it may its own destiny.

Before a benign Deity placed here either the mixed bloods and white Spaniards or the Indians of old time, He built a setting as beautiful perhaps as anything in

[1] Guatemala's area is officially 48,290 square miles or 125,071 square kilometers. Its population is put at 2,119,165, or 42 to the square mile, 17 per square kilometer.

the world. The highlands of Guatemala have been famous to the privileged few who could visit them as long as Guatemala has been an appendage of the civilized world. The lowlands of the Pacific are as fertile as Salvador and even more perfectly watered and drained by great rivers. The long-pointed slope to the Caribbean shore has concentrated the fertility which marks the whole length of the littoral of that magnificent sea.

As with all things that are unspoiled, we find Guatemala almost as lovely when we travel the conventional roads as when we seek its glories in the back trails. From Salvador we arrive at the open roadstead of the port of San José de Guatemala, a bare black shore with a single short pier upon which the lighter lands us from a swinging, whirling cradle above the waters of the Pacific. We are hurried through the port with an efficiency which is unexplained, casual and Guatemalan, but thoroughly effective. In fact, by the time we board our train we are already caught in the country's charm. We sit down in the midst of a crowded carload of friendly natives. The engine puffs, the string of little yellow coaches pulls out of the station, and although, as usual, it takes us the full day to go the seventy-six miles (and climb the 5,000 feet) to Guatemala City, nothing happens in all that time to shake us from our first impression of surprised delight at the cordiality and contentment of the Guatemalans.

Nor can anything interfere with our enjoyment. A stranger in the seat behind us cheerfully insists on lending us 25 pesos (a peso was once worth 50 cents U.S. Cy., but now it is worth 2 cents) when the refreshment

vendor finds she cannot take our American money. Later we make an exchange, and when rolls of 200 pesos have stuffed our pockets quite out of shape, a skilful native (name and station unknown) soon lifts the same and leaves us penniless, and shapely, once more—but we never seem to care. Guatemala does it all so cordially! And in any case the market women at the train-side distract our attention as they exchange badinage merrily with the heads stuck out the car windows on either side of us. One smiles in motherly indulgence when a passenger refuses to pay her 10 pesos (20 cents U.S. Cy.) for half a fried chicken, because it is too expensive, and another, asked if the stuffed peppers she is selling are sufficiently piquant, answers with a grin, "Try them!"

Along the trail, where the train stops (and it always stops for ten minutes) are shops built of wooden planks or of heavy wattle, roofed with high-peaked thatch. The towns are picturesque and, for a miracle in the tropics, great shade trees have been conserved by the municipalities. The people seem to take pride in themselves and in their customs, and even the shops are named as one names them in old Spain, only modernized names, now, like "The Meat Market of the Hygiene." They are practical folk, too, and on dry days when the rainy season should have arrived long since, they place outdoors, on tables or chairs set in the broiling sun, the statues and pictures of the Saints. Thus the Saints, being made uncomfortable by the sun, will bring the rain to relieve themselves and so, incidentally, the parched earth!

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The American Legation in Guatemala City.

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The lovely "Volcano of Water" as it rises above Antigua, Guatemala.

The dress of the Guatemalans indicates their full satisfaction with the national ways and customs—new and old. The Indians, of whom we are to see much that is picturesque, go about in their native costumes of white cotton and low-peaked hats with tiny brims, about their bodies abbreviated tartans of their individual villages. The middle-class townsmen and ranchers wear dark cotton suits with leggings of bright yellow leather cut like high boots above their knees, gray shirts and big hats. Sometimes they go so far as to wear the big velvet cowboy sombreros of Texas under a sun of considerably greater caloric potency. Even the little children seem to have their own manners. We see far fewer youngsters wandering about with nothing at all on their backs, and are pleased to note the modesty of a young lady of some six years, swinging contentedly on a fence, arrayed effectively in a pair of short white pantaloons. At another station a smiling *hacendado*, in riding clothes surely from London or New York, but seated in a great silver-studded Guatemalan saddle, draws up at the turn into a wooded path to wave his hat in welcome and farewell.

The way from San José to Guatemala City blossoms (even before we have left the environs of the populous port) into a beauty that never leaves us all the long day. A clear blue sky arches above the dark jungle, and in the distance soon rises above the horizon the first of the cone-shaped blue volcanoes which, like a literal crown, surround every spot from which the eye looks in southern Guatemala. Soon there are foothills, and above them again the peaked mountain rises momen-

tarily through a bank of clouds about its base, clouds which roll majestically into gorgeous pictures. More mountains loom in the distance as the train moves inland. They mass under the white clouds, and through the blue shadows of those clouds stand out black foothills above the light green foreground of the fields and lower hills.

When the real climb begins (after we have passed the charming and picturesque tropical city of Escuintla) the valley up which the train travels gives ever narrowing vistas of the heights above us and ever broadening views of the vast sweep of the Pacific plain below. The long blue line of sea fades imperceptibly into sky, but it is not lost until the train curves about the wide green mountain toward which it has been climbing for five hours and loses itself to the Pacific around the shore of beautiful Lake Amátitlan. Here the blue volcanoes merge into the landscape and become part of the common picture and of our daily thought.

Guatemala City, the capital, lies only a few miles beyond Lake Amátitlan. As we approach it, we pass through many fields of maize and wheat and see for the first time the long, narrow valleys filled with rich "bottomlands" which mark the highlands of Guatemala. They are wonderful valleys, which in contour and location present a farming problem whose uniqueness has long kept observers from realizing Guatemala's opportunity, in them, for raising the great temperate-zone food crops here in the tropics where temperate weather is a year-around matter at a height of 5000 feet above the

sea. The train hurries us on to the capital which, too, is set within a garden valley.

The train approaches the chief city of Central America down an avenue of beautiful pine trees, which offer fragrant welcome. After the long weeks of what the North American or the European may consider hardships, the comfortable serenity of the capital of Guatemala offers a relief which no one attempts to deny. Guatemala is the only really urban centre of all Central America. Its population is officially put at 125,000, and many of the houses which were rebuilt after the 1917 earthquake are substantial and imposing. Here for the first time we find modern shops, a splendid hotel gauged to the standard of Europe or the United States, and a colony of foreigners sufficiently numerous so that we can lose in part the extremely personal identity which we have carried ever since we first landed in Costa Rica.

We descend from the train in a modern station, take automobile or coach and bump our way to the hotel over the most remarkable street surfacing known to the civilized world. For the central streets of Guatemala were covered some twenty years ago according to the most approved methods—of the manufacturers of sidewalk pavements! From distant quarries were brought innumerable trainloads of hand-cut lime flagstones eighteen to twenty-four inches square, and these, laid upon a base of sand, formed what was probably as beautiful a street covering as man could well design. Today, unfortunately, the even level at which these paving stones were

laid has disappeared through the course of one large and several small earthquakes, and through the attentions of innumerable cumbersome ox-carts. Thus, although there remains the mirrorlike quality of the smooth flagstones which resplendently reflects the tropic sun in the eye of the unwary, the smoothness of these pavements has disappeared, and they jog themselves solidly into memory.

Guatemala City remains one of the imposing and delightful capitals of Latin America. Its population gives it urbanity, commerce and industry, and its gentle slope makes it one of the most sanitary cities of Central America. Those glassy-paved streets lead to many quaint houses and to rare old parks, remnants of the beauty of other days. The churches are still of old time, and although some of the finest, and all of the public buildings, disappeared in the earthquake in 1917, those that remain give that touch of antiquity which the Central American loves quite as much as the tourist from beyond the seas.

These old buildings, however, have themselves come down from only 140 years before, for this is "New Guatemala" City, as distinguished from the older "Antigua (or Ancient) Guatemala," thirty miles away in the higher mountains. But for all that the original bits of the new city were very beautiful, as the vistas of the old parkway and the stone benches and the churches which remain amply testify. But as she is, with the ruined Cathedral towers piled in the court of the great church, and even with Chinese pagodas edging the main plaza where once were rows of graceful Span-

ish arches, Guatemala City is delightful. The handsome two-story buildings which once lined the streets are gone now, but in their place are rising, already, fine clubs and new residences and shops, and the proud Sixth Avenue of the metropolis of Central America quite bears out all its claims to the interest of the traveler and resident—if not of the antiquarian.

But we are quite willing to exchange the picturesque beauty for the comfort of the new modern hotel, or for that matter, of the older American, French and real Spanish hostelries. We come to love this fine old city, although we miss, at first, the wealthy suburbs which make San Salvador so luxurious. For exchange, however, we have, in the very environs of the capital itself, true Indian villages, and on the road to the ancient city of Antigua unrolls one of the most wonderful pictures of Indian primeval life that can be found in the whole world today. Along this highway seem to come all the food and much of the raiment (hand-woven wool and cotton goods) of the people of Guatemala. Most of it is carried on the backs (or on the heads) of Indians, in the dress of their villages, the men in cotton and wool in sober colors, the women in their gorgeous dresses of dark blue or brilliant crimson wool, with elaborately embroidered jacket-waists of cotton or silk.

We need not, however, go even to the Antigua road to see and feel the overwhelming presence of the Indians of Guatemala. Over the streets of the capital they trot or trudge unconcernedly by the hundreds on their way under their packs, and they fill the big central market with the vivid colors of their raiment and of their

goods and with the sound of their strange, almost Oriental, languages. The Guatemalan Indian has no diffidence about coming to the strongholds of the white man. He penetrates to every town, bringing his stores of vegetables, fruits and flowers, his pigs and his chickens, his pottery, his basketry and his bales of hand-woven woolens. Rather he overwhelms and dominates the modern, galvanized iron market shelters with the most gorgeous and tempting display. He never loses his identity, he seldom changes his native garb, and only when he serves in the army as a barefoot soldier in khaki does he conform in any way to the customs of the civilization which rules over him.

Guatemala rests upon an immense population (well over 1,250,000 or three-fourths of the whole) of these non-assimilable Indians. Their problem is everywhere in Guatemala, and inescapable. The Indian is the national labor of Guatemala. The Indian is the greatest potential market of Guatemala. The Indian supports, as an unthinking soldier, all the governments of Guatemala or supports those that overthrow them. The Indian submits himself to the rule of white and mixed blood, but with a certain inscrutable acceptance which must time and again bring doubt and fear to the hearts of those on whom rest the obligations of their government.

To understand this problem is the most difficult and important demand upon the foreigner who visits this wonderful land. Here he cannot think merely of the beauty and color and fertility, the opportunities and the apparent lack of native initiative in developing these opportunities. He who would understand Guatemala,

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Wheels of solid mahogany or cedar are the commonplace of the ox-cart background of Central American industry.

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The famous flagstone-paved streets of Guatemala City—and the newest generation of the ox-carts that have pounded ceaselessly on its mirror-like surface for a quarter of a century.

commercial or political, who would profit in Guatemala or would help her to her solutions, has before him a book all but unread by white men, one still enfolded in the mysteries of environment and race and history.

The highlands of Guatemala, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, are the Indian country. The barest description would cover more pages than this book contains. Yet one bit of it we must see, a trip through the richest and not the least picturesque part. It will take us through the greatest Indian city in the New World, Quezaltenango (or Xelajú, as the Indians call it, doubtless under the impression that "Quezaltenango" does not sound sufficiently Indian) and to one of the most beautiful lakes in the world, Lake Atitlán.[1] It is a trip not without its hardships, but simply arranged, and worth all the time we can give to it. It takes us into the heart of Guatemala, where the foreigner is much more of a curiosity to the natives than the natives can possibly be to him.

There is an ancient Indian overland highway, passable in the dry season (November to May), from Guatemala to Quezaltenango, but as wise travelers we shall start from the Pacific side, setting the background of our memory of the trip against the blue panorama of the Cordillera.

We return by the railway which brought us to the capital from San José de Guatemala on the Pacific; but at Santa María, about thirty miles from the coast, we turn northwestward on the branch line railway which

[1] The names of the two lakes, Atitlán, in the high mountains, and Amátitlan near Guatemala City, are not to be confused. They are related in no way, save by the similarity of sound.

goes to the Mexican border. This carries us the length of the Pacific plain, as fertile here as in intensively cultivated Salvador. We travel the road, skirting the edge of the cordillera, to the fine old town of Retalhuleu, not far from the international line. Were we to go on, we should be able—excepting for the temporarily washed-out bridge across the Suchiate River at the border—to continue by rail on to Mexico City, Washington and New York.

But through travel seems very far away from us here, as our leisurely train rambles through miles of pale green canefields, past sun-bathed forests, with stretches in between of pastures of tall pampas-grasses, with cattle, shoulder-deep, in the rich fodder. And always, to our right, is the steep crown of that superb range of volcanoes, a round dozen of them, stretching from horizon to horizon, seeming, almost, to click past us, like telegraph poles, as our train goes its way.

We reach Retalhuleu in the afternoon of the same day we leave Guatemala City, but it seems centuries away from the capital. Not because it is less urban—it is far from that—but because it carries about it an atmosphere of detachment and of the calm of Spanish colonial days which are its own unique possession. It is the one city of Guatemala which has never been shaken by earthquakes, due perhaps to its location on the broad, fertile plain of the Pacific, with no rocks beneath its soil, or (the natives will tell us) because it always has close at hand an active volcano as a safety-valve for any unsettled condition in the insides of the earth beneath it.

Be that as it may, Retalhuleu is old, older than Gua-

temala. Its pink and blue and yellow houses boast the ancient wide eaves which are always missing in earthquake-zones (thanks equally to pre-vision and to the earthquakes themselves) and on rainy days one goes about under them quite dry and warm. The square is filled with neatly trimmed round trees, a fine old church, and a modern government palace which is surprising and imposing. Retalhuleu belongs to the Guatemala of the whites and mixed-bloods, but of those to whom the capital is not, thank you, the only spot in the world—they like their own phase of Guatemala!

Retalhuleu is the centre of a coffee-growing and shipping area, but for us just now, it is important as the starting point of the automobile drive into the highlands. From Retalhuleu, when we have passed the night at its picturesque little hotel, we start the trip, along roads rivaling in beauty and interest the great highway of Honduras, up to the city of Quezaltenango.

First the way is through coffee *fincas,* stone-fenced, and along the edge of hills which rise like green fronds to embrace the sharp blue slope of the volcano of Santa María with her smoking new crater on her torn white side. Soon we are in the town of San Felipe, with a sunny market place sparkling with square white awnings over little mats spread with wares. Up (and steeply so) we climb through San Felipe's cobbled streets, lined with one-storied white houses with brown-tiled roofs. The long road leads away through deep cuts with fern-grown sides and high jungle trees (or coffee in heavy shade, quite as often) high above us. Innumerable Indians are passing, now, loaded with

packs of pottery and vegetables coming down, or with bananas, going up—for this tropical delicacy is quite as much appreciated in the Guatemalan highlands as in New York or London. Scampering, before the sound of our automobile engine can conceivably have reached their ears, the Indian mothers shepherd their little flocks of babies up the steep sides of the road like goats, as we come tearing toward them, like a devouring juggernaut.

The whole way is filled, whether we are interested or no, with life and adventures innumerable. There is nothing of contrast or of paradox which we escape. Apparently with all clear ahead, we whirl along and down a dizzy slope, across a ford and the next moment we are in a tangle of sixteen oxen harnessed to a heavy wagon bearing a piece of electrical machinery to some highland power-house. Or around a sharp promontory to find an immense motor lorry stuck in the mud with a hundred Indians (dressed in costumes of multi-colored variety ranging from a dark blue kilt to a full-length woolen robe of flowing crimson) dragging at a dozen ropes and swarming over its still intact load!

Along this highway, too, they are building an electrically operated railway, a railway proudly financed by Guatemalan capital and built by Guatemalan engineers, which will link Quezaltenango, the second city of the country, to the trunk line of the International Railway near Retalhuleu. High above and far below us as we climb, we can see the cuts for the track and here and there a long grade built and finished, and already moss-covered to match the jungle.

The highway we climb winds its way in steep ascents

and sharp declivities through a series of gemlike valleys ever up toward the heights. Those heights are marked to left and right before us, and sometimes behind us, by the beautiful volcanoes. There is for many miles Santa María, smoking in active eruption. In the far distance are the volcanoes "Fire" and "Water" which dominate Lake Amátitlan, which we passed on our way to Guatemala City, and in between a dozen more, all beautiful, all blue, all cloud-covered. To our right, as we ascend, is a deep cañon, and at the village of Santa María (a half-way house) the adventurous can climb out along an overhanging tree and gaze down through a thousand feet of green to the tall cataract which is being linked to the dynamos that will operate the railway.

So the day passes, and always along the road there are ranch houses and villages and passing Indian carriers until at last suddenly, down a many-curved descent, we make a turn around a tiny peak and below us stretches, in a broad, sublimely beautiful valley, the city of Quezaltenango.

Like the sloping edges of a shallow saucer, the valley rises to low peaks irregular on the horizon, and the city's streets eddy from the slopes to a narrow level in the heart of the town. On the outskirts and through the ubiquitous surrounding truck-farms, the streets and roads are straight and Spanish, lined with neat walls and tall trees, but at the centre we reach the midst of a tangle of irregular and crooked paths, steep Indian trails with overhanging houses and romantic corners—a sight seldom come upon in Central America. Old Quezaltenango is rich with her own atmosphere, a city of

thousands of Indians, living in brick and adobe houses, dressing, most of them, in the clothes of the modern world, and yet with streets that have grown here from the goat-tracks of a prehistoric Indian village.

Quezaltenango is a city self-contained, perhaps the most completely so of all the cities of Central America. Its population is 25,000, of whom 20,000 are Indians. Here is located the most powerful bank in Guatemala, to a large extent the product of Indian thrift. And here are streets where every day we can see hundreds of Indians in their native garb, in dozens of differing garbs! The Indian country is here, all about us, and yet more is beyond.

Many hundreds of travelers find their way to Quezaltenango. One perhaps in a thousand of these makes the journey overland through the highlands toward Guatemala City, as we shall do. For now we are turning back toward the capital, and when we leave behind us the interest and the hospitality of this mountain city and go further into the wilderness we are at the same time shortening the distance between ourselves and the capital of Guatemala. There are many ways to make the journey, but there is one so filled with beauty and so famous for its picturesqueness that it must perforce claim us. This is the road which leads from Quezaltenango straight along the summit of the western range of the cordillera to the city of Sololá, and thence southward to beautiful Lake Atitlán. And then, if we will, southward through the rich coffee *fincas* and back to the railway.

From Quezaltenango we start, as usual, in the early

morning. With the break of dawn we are about, and ghostly servitors carrying candles in the necks of tall bottles (the electricity is turned off at 5 A. M.) have wakened us, fed us and loaded us into our automobile. We are packed into that automobile, however, with hardly half the blankets or half the comfort that we shall need, for here, at 7,000 feet altitude, even in the heart of the tropics, the mornings of the Guatemalan "winter" are bitter cold and the dawn comes all too slowly to warm us with the only heat which the tropic dweller recognizes as legitimate.

In a momentary turn around the town, we pass the market, which in this chilly clime does not open until the disgraceful hour of 8 A. M., speed through the deserted Street of the Seven Corners, and out along a modern macadam boulevard. At the edge of Quezaltenango we cross the river, which, according to tradition, ran with the blood of 12,000 Indians when the great Pedro de Alvarado met, defeated and slew in single combat, the Indian King Tecum in 1523. Soon our motor car is taking the easy grade up to the edge of the saucer of the valley of Quezaltenango.

Already we are in our first wheat-fields, short and green now in a morning chill worthy of a frosty spring in Kansas. The roads are lined with lordly maguey plants, the *agave* which makes the famous national drink of México but which here is used only to produce the fibre for a native rope. Over the last hill of the valley of Quezaltenango and we are in the midst of the first of a series of tiny fertile valleys.

These are the most important and characteristic fea-

ture, from an agricultural standpoint, of the highlands of Central America. We saw them under intensive cultivation as we neared Guatemala City, and here, for hours, we drive through them. They are cut up, here, into innumerable Indian *milpas* or patches of wheat and maize, all cultivated crudely by hand. They are obviously very fertile, and they are watered the year around by the little rivers which run through them, and on which they are strung, literal green beads upon a silver wire. Low hills cut them off one from another and there they lie, varying in size from a mile long by half a mile wide to three miles long and a mile and a half wide at their widest. Not great tracts but capable, certainly, of a development by their native owners with simple machinery adapted, as no present machinery is, to their practical problems. The future, here, is not to be despised.

For two hours and more we pass through these valleys and through strings of villages, drawn together by the smooth road and linked yet more by the endless line of Indians loaded with the products of their towns, rope or pottery or onions or chickens or woolen cloth. They begin to fill the highway as the sun comes out and as a little of the chill of the frosty morning rises with the mist. These villages are such as those we passed en route to Quezaltenango, but now all picturesque, all inhabited by Indians in the special dress of the village, and all silently clamoring to us by their very individuality to pause and visit them. The houses are low and of whitewashed adobe, tile-roofed, the life centering

about a market-place or a park fed by a *pila* or fountain of running water.

The natives are these same quiet, reticent Indians. The men (bent under their packs) are now chiefly dressed in wool, and the women with their long blue or red skirts of a single length of wool wrapped about them, all in the village of the same pattern of interwoven white lines, and all the villages different.

In one village the women wear skirts dragging on the ground, and passing through the same village may be a group from a neighboring town, with their woolen skirts touching only their knees, and their bare brown legs below. In another town, the men are dressed in bright black-and-white tweed, faced with brilliant blue, trousers short, jackets with blue-faced pockets and lapels like a modern blazer, while on the road beyond we may meet a group dressed in long brown robes with a resplendent yellow sun embroidered crudely on their breasts.

The women demurely doing the family washing around the roomy *pila* beneath a solemn warning of a fine of 25 pesos for bathing (modesty is no deterrent) will be dressed in pink calico waists and long, wrapped blue skirts. Passing by them will be a tiny family group from another village, the man in plain white cotton but with a kilt-like apron of brown and white tartan plaid, the woman covered from head to foot with a robe of white wool like a priest's cope, elaborately embroidered around neck and shoulders. The pictures are too tempting for us to dare pause to contemplate them if

we would make our journey that day. With the panorama whirling back into the distance behind us we go on and on into the mountains.

As yet we are not free from the cold morning mist,—7 A. M. at 8,000 feet above the sea is not warm, at the opening of the rainy season, even if we are at a mere fifteenth parallel of latitude! The chill has been condensing the rain clouds into a fog, and suddenly this fog sweeps down upon us, covering, burying us, our road, and all the villages and farmlands. Yet through the literally impenetrable cloud we go on, passing as in the night footmen and horsemen and mule trains we can not see, and sensing in the offing huts of farmers from the hand-worked fields which dimly edge the road.

Now and again the fog lightens, long enough to let us look out over the narrow fields and to catch glimpses of an Indian Man-With-the-Hoe as he bends, in the haze of this soft mist, over his heaped-up hills of wheat. A strange, quiet, cold world it is, in many ways only a world of toil and darkness. We come to realize that these Indian wheat farmers with their heavy hoes not only never heard of a McCormick reaper, but they have never seen an ox-plough! Their only tool is the clumsy, heavy hoe of cast iron, apparently designed for the sole purpose of approximating as nearly as possible the stone axes of their primeval ancestors.

The huts which we can see sometimes when the fog lifts or when we pass close to them are veritable Arctic igloos,—we feel that they are peculiarly appropriate in that chilly tropic fog. Made of straw which is fastened together at the top and drops on all sides like a basket,

they are crowned at the point where the straw is joined by an old fire-blackened earthenware pot upturned to prevent the unwelcome rains from finding their way through the crudely woven thatch.

We fret sometimes that the fog has hidden the world about us, but it may be that it has hidden it for the greater joy of the beauties that it will reveal when it is gone. When the sharp climb into the higher mountains begins, we rise rapidly from the level of fogs into the sunlight of the heights, with all the glory of their wide horizons. As we approach the important city of Totonicapán the road winds suddenly and sharply up from the valley to a bluff whence we look down out of thinner clouds on the rolling sea of white vapor in the narrow valleys below. In the town, higher still, we reap the glory of all this climb, and all the clouds, in the sublime panorama of the Pacific cut by the foreground of white-robed hills and by the blue peaks of a dozen great volcanoes.

Even so picturesque a gem as Totonicapán itself does not draw our eyes to earth. We hurry by the grass-grown, deserted plaza, for it is still early morning in these cold heights, and few people are yet about. We push by the picturesque *pilas*, attended only here and there by a woman dressed in the elaborate yellow and pink *huipil* which seems characteristic of the town. We pass the ruined "Temple of Minerva," relic not of an ancient civilization but of the just-departed, seemingly half-pagan, era of Estrada Cabrera. Then at last we are in the hills above. The pink-tiled roofs of these houses, with their white walls, line on line, stretch away

from us, as we pause and wait and look, because we must, at the panorama of blue volcano, gray mountain, green hill and white clouded valley, with the calm city for foreground.

It is here, just above Totonicapán, that we enter into the actual mountain country. About us are the Indian wheat-fields of the highlands terraced on the steepest of hills, where the workmen are already delving with their heavy hoes on farms fifty feet wide running steeply up a forty-five degree hillside for 300 feet and more! These farms, cut in terraces (to prevent their washing away) raise the wheat of the Indian villages and give employment (and plenty of it, one may say) to the thin population of the hills.

The drive through the fog and the sudden leap upward at Totonicapán has brought us into a new world. We are almost at the timber-line before we reach the summit of our climb, but for three gorgeous hours we pass over valley after valley, here a spot that reminds us of a deer park in the Colorado Rockies, there a bit of close-cropped greensward with a spring trickling across the hard road-bed, and pine trees crowding to the edge in a picture that is Switzerland. And when we finally reach the summit of this most westerly of the twin rows of the cordillera and look across a deep valley to the sister mountains of the eastern line, we are in the midst of a magnificence comparable almost to the Andes. Now, as our road lies for an hour through the upper heights, there is always the ridge of distant, level gray peaks to our left, accented infrequently by the sharp, even cones of two volcanoes upon their summit.

On our own side we are in a land almost deserted. We pass lonely pairs of Indians, now two men in a costume of heavy pink cotton and wool with packs upon their backs, and the silent cold green of the forests around them; then an old man with his woman, both in crude blue wool that at first glimpse seems like the finest cheviot, and an old mule to whom the motor car is as a beast from the inferno.

Only these, who pass us silently, until we reach up into the sheep-herding country, where again we touch the edge of industry. Herds of the tiny highland sheep of Guatemala graze upon the hills, now watched by sheep dogs that, however, never came from Scotland, now only by silent shepherds, wrapped in their black-and-white shawls. We pass dozens of herds and sometimes if we pause to pick the mountain violets hidden in the short grass of the almost denuded heights, they will pass us driving their sheep with no other sound than their long whips cracking with a report like a pistol shot which echoes through the hills around them and sends the sheep scampering on their way.

So we pass through the sheep country, into the forests of timber where trees fit for the building of ships are sawed by hand into 2 x 4 beams or chopped with an adz into rough house timbers. Here great forest giants gleam white and pitiful, torn by a recent storm, witness that nature is no less prodigal than man, tearing with lightning raw gashes a hundred feet long from branch to ground. Yet this very timber country, easily accessible to motor lorries which never come, waiting for the development which modern conditions have made

possible these dozen years, is sublime of itself, to breathe and smell and listen to its silences.

At last, when beauty and wonder seem to have all but lost their savor, the view opens to our right, and far down below us, we see for a moment the blue lake of Atitlán. It gleams above the clouds in the valley, first like a vertical sheet of azure, hung against the sky, but as we watch, it flattens and fits into its hills and down around its volcanoes with a beauty literally indescribable. The glimpse is all too fleeting, and we are turned again into the towering forests of pine and hemlock, hung with ferns and spotted with exotic, star-white flowers.

It is well past noon when we come upon Los Encuentros, literally "the Crossroads" where the highways to Quezaltenango, Sololá and Guatemala City join, for from here we might, if we would, (and the season were right) return to the capital. But our way is southward to Sololá and wonderful Lake Atitlán. We turn gingerly around a sharp corner, disturb flocks of Indians roosting, with their packs set down behind them, along the roadside like so many tame birds, and as they flutter back to new resting-places we find the highway cleared to Sololá.

Below is an entrancing vista of the white houses and the peaked church of Sololá itself, and for the first time in all these wonderful miles we seem to touch finite things again. The mystery of the mountain heights, the impenetrable secrets of the thoughts and the lives of the Indians who have belonged there, fade into the deep con-

tentment of a precious memory. For now everything has become activity and life.

The tiny valley through which we pass into Sololá is filled with little farmhouses, some, even, with native threshing floors made of crooked posts,—and modern barbed wire.

The road has filled with Indians of every type and class, and for the first time we see the old and dignified *caciques* or tribal chieftains (now official mayors of the villages) with their gold-headed canes, their distinguishing black straw hats, their elaborate sandals, and their intricately embroidered jackets and kilts of fine native wool. The country folk who meet them kiss their hands as if they were bishops, and they stand chatting with elaborate dignity as we find our way through their formal groups. This is the Indian country, and here we as white men come by sufferance, not by right or even by the power of our good friends, the government all the way back in Guatemala City. Indeed, the dignity of the Indian of old time is no mere matter of words or tradition in the highland province of Sololá.

In the town itself, the plaza is literally teeming with Indians, every one, young and old, male and female, dressed alike, in heavy pink madras shirts or waists, the men in trousers of the same material, the women in red wrapped woolen skirts. Sololá is a typically Spanish town, with a fine old church and straight streets, and wooden-grilled windows from which Indian faces peer out at us.

Lake Atitlán, as the crow flies, is just beyond Sololá,

but there is a drop through nearly a mile of steep roadway to its shore. We almost pick our way down the trail through groups of Indians. Most of them are loaded with their native packs, here carrying downhill crates of immense pottery bowls, and there carrying up the hill entire cartloads of vegetables, onions and corn and cabbages, on their bent backs. At one point we look upward at a cataract tumbling 300 feet from the hill above us, and breaking into spray long before it touches its new bed below where our car stands. Here the turns of the road are so sharp that automobiles must pull back and start again as in a narrow city street to make the curve.

So we come at last out on the gently sloping beach of Lake Atitlán, and fill our eyes and our soul with a view of water and white cliff and green hills and blue valleys, beautiful and inspiring even through the dim, cold clouds of afternoon. When we have looked on it, we think back to remember what we were told by those who described it to us, and the words are as if they had never had meaning. The circling rim of its hills, with its dozen villages glued like cliff-dwellings on the deep green sides, its rocks that look like Italian villas and its villas that blend into the rocks—these are a world of their own.

When, out of the mist of the next morning, the blue cones of its three perfect volcanoes push their way into the sky and bathe the picture in a holiness which is not of light nor yet of color but as of a Presence—there is no word to tell it. To find something we can touch and know we look away, to watch the terns that circle above

us, only to find them more beautiful, in white and black, than any tern or gull we ever saw before. Or, to be finite, once, from our boat we dip hands into the floating scum that is drifting toward us—to find it an acre-wide field of snow-white pumice-stone, sailing out to us, upon the water!

Miracle and magic and beauty everywhere. From around a jutting rock comes silently an Indian dugout canoe, full thirty feet long, and four feet wide, cut from a single mighty forest tree. It is paddled by twenty Indians, standing up the length of it, and all dressed in robes of crimson wool! Discouraged, we turn back to blue volcanic cones with red fields stuck on the sides of them like postage stamps,—those we can still believe in!

Lake Atitlán lies at a height of approximately 6,000 feet above the sea. When we have crossed it and passed through a most picturesque Indian village, Santiago Atitlán, we climb on horseback up 500 sheer feet of steep hill to the southern rim of the great cup in which it lies. Then we look back on the priceless picture for the last time, and plunge suddenly downward and southward into the great coffee country of Guatemala.

CHAPTER VII

GUATEMALA — BLUE GARDENS *(continued)*

All the world of the coffee *fincas* of Guatemala stretches below us now, as far as the eye can see through any break in the trees of the long trail down from the summit of the hills about Lake Atitlán. A dozen rivers enter the Pacific through Guatemala, between the borders of México and of Salvador. Each of these river valleys is spread first into the broad plain of the Pacific and then at higher levels becomes a sharp wedge into the mountain range, reaching up to the very summit of the cordillera.

From this summit we must choose the proper valley for our journey, as one is almost inaccessible from the other after we have passed down through the great spurs of the mountains. In each valley the terraces down from mountain and volcano to the sea are sharply defined, and upon these terraces coffee *fincas*, then sugar plantations, then pasture lands are found one after the other. It is upon the two or three highest of these terraces, at altitudes of 2,000 to 5,000 feet, that the coffee grows, under conditions typical of the best in the industry.

The pictures that surround us are of coffee trees in long rows on the steep slopes, sharp jungle ridges lined with the gleaming shrubs, and above them heavy shade

trees. The coffee of Guatemala grows under a relatively heavy shadow, as on the lower levels there is danger of sun and on the higher, the peril of frost. Many plantations, too, lie on the slopes of volcanoes (where the owner is fortunate enough) for here, as in Salvador, the porous volcanic soil serves as a sponge and the productivity seems in definite relation to the retention of the moisture by this porous ground beneath the coffee trees. The rain through all this section is, moreover, very heavy, ranging from 100 up to 150 inches a year, falling during about eight months of the year. Indeed, no planter questions the statement that the climate of Guatemala and the soil of this Pacific slope are as perfectly adapted to coffee growing as any area in the world.

Yet it is in this very region that one faces the great Indian problem of Guatemala in its essentials. Coffee is one of the "plantation crops," demanding much labor and that at a low price. It requires seventeen days' labor, throughout the year, to produce 100 lbs. of coffee on the best managed plantations, and up to thirty days on the worst. The labor varies in cost in different regions, and fluctuates from year to year, but its daily wage is actually about 16 cents U.S. Cy., giving a labor cost around $3 to $5 U.S. Cy. a quintal, or 3 to 5 cents a pound for labor alone. Added to the costs of operation, administration and transportation, plantation costs on coffee in Guatemala amount to 10 to 15 cents U.S. Cy. per pound, for coffee which sells in its best years for, say, 30 cents, and in its worst, for 10 cents in Guatemala City or at shipside.

But labor costs are not the whole of the Indian problem, even as applied to the coffee *fincas*. Indeed, the labor cost is one of the effects of the labor situation. The Guatemalan Indian does not like to work on the coffee *fincas*. At the wages paid he can make more money and live a freer and happier life by raising vegetables or making pottery, and carrying these on his own back to the market where he can trade with them.

The result of this Indian resistance and of the need of the planters for labor during the growing and especially during the picking seasons has resulted, not in the creation of a more tempting and satisfactory system of payment for the Indian, but in one of the most complete systems of peonage or wage slavery remaining in the world today. This system is deeply rooted in Guatemalan economics and today the coffee business of the country declares itself absolutely dependent on it.

Briefly, the system consists in inducing the Indian, through his needs for a dowry, for money to spend at a *fiesta*, or after he has been made drunk, to accept an advance, usually of four to fifteen hundred pesos (the peso being worth just one English penny). Thus he is liable for service until the debt is paid (as it seldom if ever is) and the laws of Guatemala have always allowed the Indian to be caught, imprisoned and returned to the *fincas* if he refuses to serve out his debt.

If, in an excess of his native informality, the Indian happens to pledge himself to four or five *fincas* at the same time (a process not difficult, as his own name is Indian and the names he works under are Spanish) there are, needless to say, other complications. In actuality

the system works out into something that is even worse. Guatemalan officials, in the time of Estrada Cabrera, constituted themselves into illicit labor agencies, and the coffee growers, intent on their need for hands, paid, in cold cash, sums of money to the officials, in return for which the required laborers were delivered, under guard, for work during the picking.

Today this peonage still prevails, in its essentials. It has been much softened, to be sure, but it continues because there is no other way, for the Indian will seldom voluntarily go to the coffee plantations. This brings up a situation which must be pointed out, for it is fundamental, even if it does not perhaps offer the avenue of solution. The present system of peonage has its toll in ways other than social, for it works distinctly to two unexpected ends. One is to make the procurement of labor an "overhead" cost which increases heavily with the number of men needed, for the greater the need the greater the price which must be paid in order to get the labor.

Thus, a large plantation employing thousands of men may pay more to secure them than it pays the men to work! A smaller plantation, on the other hand, has other ways, such as giving bits of land to the Indians (even bits of land which the coffee planter has bought for the purpose in the hills near the Indian villages) where the men may raise their own crops of corn and wheat on the understanding that they come, at special wages, to the coffee *fincas* for the picking. The result of the high cost of procuring labor in any of these ways results in keeping the actual wages of that labor low.

Thus, where the Salvadorean laborer is paid 25 to 50 cents U.S. Cy. a day, the wage of Guatemalans for similar work is about 16 cents. Justly indeed does the Guatemalan Indian consider himself better employed raising maize or transporting a load of pottery on his back over the long miles of the trail than in picking coffee for the white man!

It is the same round of cause and effect, and effect becoming the cause of new effects in turn, which characterizes the Indian problem everywhere—that is, the problem of the backward peoples who are called upon, by the circumstances of their position in the world, to support a higher civilization. The Indian problem in Guatemala differs from the more general one of labor enslavement which we meet in Costa Rica in that the Indian problem here is rather more social than economic.

In Guatemala the problem can still be approached with an open mind, and might even be solved without cataclysmic economic consequences. For in Guatemala the riches of the country make it possible, first for the country to exist, economically, and to advance, if necessary without the coffee business, which is the symbol of the economic side of the Indian problem. Guatemala is not chained to this single crop, nor need its Indians be handled as slaves in any field excepting coffee growing. New crops can come, and with them changes in the social system. Slight variations in the Indians' own crops, the introduction of simple machinery, revisions of labor relationships, new methods of taxation, new

educational systems—these could come in Guatemala without bringing anything but relief with them.

Then, too, there are human elements in Guatemala which work into those phases of the Indian problem that touch the modern world, and may be counted upon to contribute to its solution. One of the significant and delightful things about all Central America is this very vivid interest and keen appraisal by its own people of its own national problems. We can often get as directly to the heart of those problems, and quite as frankly, in the armchairs of the clubs of the capitals as in the midst of the problems on the *haciendas*. Every phase of the life of Guatemala, in fact, has its place, and the keen minds of the aristocracy willingly put it in its place, with often sure, and even just, valuation.

This aristocracy, so close to the soil and thus understanding of its problems, presents one of the notable characteristics of Guatemala—the understandingness of its people. When I spoke of the efficiency with which the traveler is handled at the pier at San José de Guatemala when he arrives from Salvador, I said that the efficiency was "unexplained and casual." And so it is, always. Things are done, often more quickly than they are done elsewhere, and common men and women, we discover, have thought as fast—or a bit faster—than we have. This is something of a shock to the Anglo-Saxon, who instinctively judges his intellectual superiority by the fact that he thinks something like twice as fast as his working classes. Their processes of efficiency here are unexplained, but nevertheless they cut to the heart

of the matter, and then go about the next job with casual nonchalance.

These characteristics the aristocracy and the workers have in common. They go back to the heritages which Spain and the empire of the Mayas have bequeathed—rich heritages indeed! The Spanish strains which have built Guatemala are Asturians and Castilians chiefly, with the two characteristics of idealistic vision and energetic precision. The Indian element in both mixed-blood and full Indian population comes direct from the peaceful, pleasure-loving Mayas who none the less built in times past a civilization for their own Indian aristocrats which should be proof enough that they are not without the wisdom to evaluate their lives and the ability to direct them.

Two bits of Guatemala which every traveler can study with ease stand out in their ruins today as epitomic of these two racial strains. They are the cities of Antigua Guatemala, the ancient capital of the Spaniards, and the city of Quiriguá, the site of a famous Maya capital. We must know both to understand, even vaguely, the people and the history of the country. They are easy of access, and worth all the days we can, and will, give to each.

No Spanish remains in all Latin America, not even the wonderful cathedrals and churches of México, or the classic palaces of Lima, give the traveler such a picture of the contribution of the Spaniards to the civilization of the Western world as the abandoned and half-ruined capital at Antigua. Lying at the foot of the *Volcán del Agua*, or "Water," one of the most beautiful

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The fine old Spanish Church at Ciudad Vieja, Antigua, Guatemala, is probably the oldest church building in the American hemisphere.

One of the half-ruined patios of Antigua, Guatemala— that of the Colegio de Cristo. Above rises a dome, cracked these one hundred and fifty years, but still standing amid the churchly ruins of this once great city.

of mountains, Antigua retains virtually unspoiled the atmosphere of the Spanish conquerors and builders of the governments of these colonies. The city was abandoned in 1776, while the Spanish power was still in control, and the capital and the population bodily transferred to the present Guatemala City, thirty miles distant through the mountains.

Three years before, Antigua had been visited by a disastrous earthquake and virtually all the magnificent churches and the beautiful public buildings were badly damaged, and hundreds of palatial homes razed to the ground. Off in the valley where now stands the present Guatemala City a tiny settlement about a church was untouched by the catastrophe. This gave the excuse for the transfer of the population, then estimated at close to 100,000 people, from the old site to the new. Those who whisper gossip (even though it be gossip a hundred years old) assure us that it was not the earthquake so much as the fact that the Church of Rome held mortgages on every inch of ground in Antigua that caused the decision to move the capital to lands less encumbered. Be that as it may, whoever held mortgages on land in Antigua lost a pretty penny, for today in this beautiful city one can purchase a fine and thoroughly habitable house with a lovely garden for $500 of American money, and for $1,000 one can possess as one's very own half a dozen acres of as picturesque a ruined, but still quite habitable, monastery as can be found in all the world.

Antigua in the days of its prosperity boasted some thirty vast churches, monasteries and convents, so built

that to this day literal miles of their corridors and deserted buildings are still roofed and indeed inhabited by fortunate native families who rent a pair of spacious rooms under arched and carved ceilings for the equivalent of one American dollar a month.

Antigua today has 30,000 inhabitants and is far from deserted. Excepting for the church ruins, it bears little sign of the hundred-year-old catastrophe. The great palace of the Spanish Captain-General of Guatemala marches its beautiful, massive columns and arches in two fine tiers across the full 300 feet width of the still beautiful plaza. Its houses, pink and blue and yellow, with tints old or new, delight us with proud coats of arms above the doorways and glimpses of beautiful old patios through the barred windows. The great churches, some as large as any in the Americas today, rear ruined arches above desolation untouched by man's hand these hundred years, and still half covering gems of sculpture and architecture which are both inspiring, still, and romantic in their solitude.

Yet not all solitude, for, as I have said, some of these very churches are inhabited. I do not forget the picture of the roofless ruin of Santa Teresa church into which we looked one night, to see under the broad arch of a still perfect organ loft a tiny fire around which moved ghostly figures of a ragged, doubtless unappreciative Indian family.

Nor are the ruins all there is of historic Antigua. There is still perfect to this day the church of La Merced, with its low towers and a design unique even in the rich architecture of Hispanic America. In one

corner of the church building stands the stone cross of the *Caballeros de la Merced*, before which each new Captain-General had to swear his allegiance as he had sworn it to his King in Spain before he could sit as ruler over this proud capital.

Last, we stand in admiration and delight in the bit of the old University of Guatemala which still remains completely undamaged by the great earthquake and by all the vandalism that has followed it. In perfect Moorish arches, with coats of arms of Castile and of the Church alternating around the fine patio, it makes us long to see it live again the days that have been. For today it is a boy's public school and the beautiful music chamber of colonial years is the sole moving picture house of Antigua!

Today Antigua is populated almost entirely by Indians. Lying at the ideal height for the growth of the finest coffee (about 5,500 feet) coffee trees fill the ruined gardens, grow in the courts of roofless churches, and line the beautiful roads for miles out toward the mountains. The Indian townsmen live on the industry of plantations whose product is famous as "Antigua coffee" wherever there are men wise or rich enough to purchase it. The town's shops, the palaces, and the now smoke-stained cloistered tenements which were once bits of the churchly glory of Antigua, give as complete a vision of the dominance of the Indians in the life of Guatemala as will a visit to the most distant village in the highlands.

Nowhere else, even in Guatemala (certainly in no other spot in Latin America), could we find the entire

instrumental equipment of a native Indian band (chiefly mahogany drums, of every shape and size) piled cosily up in a corner beside an altar of so proud a church as La Merced in Antigua! Yet there we could see them, this coming Sunday, and there, if we looked about, we would find the band, seated in the sun of the plaza. One of the group would perhaps be able to speak Spanish, and if so, the instruments might be recovered from beside the altar, and the band play for us, bare-legged, straw-hatted, yet clothed in rich blue cheviot from shoulder to knee—on the terrace of the front of the church. Indeed, Antigua has its many lessons for us of the importance of her Indians in all the life of Guatemala.

For all its picturesque Indianism, however, Antigua tells us always but one story, the wisdom and the solidity of those Spaniards who loved this country as we love it. Only they proved their love in ways beyond mere feasting their eyes and warming their lonely souls, as we do. They built it into the modern land which it was in those days, as this great city proves beyond cavil, even in its ruins.

The spirit of Antigua travels with us, as we turn our backs to return along the busy highway through the mountains to the modern capital. About us crowds all the romance of old time, in the ox-carts which still pass along this road and in the hundreds of Indian carriers with their packs, Indian women with their babies on their backs, and, on their heads, broad baskets of fruits and vegetables and chickens, and eggs, even, on their way to market. In them we can vision, through all those thirty miles, the passing of the ox-carts and colorful

Indian carriers who, over a century ago, for ten years after the destruction of Antigua passed and repassed over this very road, moving the goods and household gods of the old Guatemalans to their new capital.

Only we have changed, we and our automobile which takes the place of the old six-mule diligence that leaped and dragged its slow way over these steep inclines and through the same villages and looked down on identical Indians. The spirit of Antigua, serene, quiet, magnificent, has marked its own place in this world about us, seemingly forever. Above us towers the beautiful volcano of *Agua,* insisting in its warm majesty that we remember, always, the wonder and the beauty of the azure land in which this spirit dwelt and grew. So indeed do we remember. For we can never escape, even if we would, beauty and blue volcanoes and blue gardens, in this wonderful country.

Guatemala has yet one more sublime picture to unroll to us, and one more tale to tell—of many pictures and of many tales. This is the picture of the great Indian element in the building of Guatemala—the ancient city with its group of carved monoliths which is called Quiriguá.

This superb ruin is one of many such sites of great Maya cities, for Guatemala and Honduras and the states of Tabasco, Campeche and Yucatán in México comprised the centre of the supreme Indian civilizations which flourished for about a thousand years each before and after the beginning of the Christian era. At Copán on the border between Guatemala and Honduras, a two days' ride from the railway, is one of the most famous

ruins in the world, probably the cultural centre of the great Maya civilization. Papier-maché casts of its monuments occupy special rooms in the British Museum in London and in the American Museum of Natural History in New York.

In the extreme northward, weeks by horseback through the trackless jungles of the Guatemalan department of Petén, are yet other ruins, and beyond them, in México, the priceless treasures of Maya history at Palenque, Chichen-Ytzá and Uxmal. In the very environs of Guatemala City are acres of tall mounds, and idols and monoliths and slabs of a pre-Maya culture lie there today in open pastures as they have lain for centuries. Off to the northwest, in the mountains of Quiché, are ruins and mounds of great interest and beauty. Throughout the whole of the Pacific and Atlantic plains every cultivation, every exploration of the jungle, turns up its cities or its idols; and broken pottery, obsidian knives and arrowheads are found in every cultivated field. Guatemala can indeed boast honestly of those thirty millions of Indians who are said to have once made up its population.

Yet of all the treasured relics of the Maya civilization, none is more beautiful, or more accessible, than Quiriguá. Four days after one sails from New Orleans one can be in the midst of it, and be looking on beautiful carvings whose story is unknown and whose meaning is only beginning to be deciphered. Quiriguá is on the main line of the railway between Guatemala City and the Caribbean port of Puerto Barrios. A hand car or a banana train will take us to within five minutes' walk

of the primæval grove of tropical jungle where its monuments stand as they have stood, untouched, for centuries. The ruins are in the midst of miles of banana plantations, but the United Fruit Company has wisely preserved a few acres of the original jungle around these relics of the golden age of Maya civilization.

We approach the site of Quiriguá through the banana groves and finally through the jungle, close and hot, the only sign of life a fluttering brilliant blue butterfly which crosses our path as we pick our way between the vine-clad trees. We come out suddenly on the great plaza or court of what was doubtless the ceremonial centre of a rich Indian capital.

At either end, a quarter of a mile apart, are terraced mounds twenty feet high. In the open space between, stand rows of great monolithic columns carved with a precision and beauty unsurpassed by anything in India or in Egypt. These monoliths, transported from quarries three miles away, are, some of them, thirty-five feet high and from three to five feet square—and yet the Indians had neither traction animals nor, probably, any machinery. Here these monoliths stand, however, witness of energy and devotion, and witness, too, of an artistic ability that suggests no sense of crudeness either in tools or workmanship, design or artistry. The sculptors who carved these colossal, Egyptian-like figures, created exactly what they had planned to make, in beautifully conventionalized patterns, with a sense of pure design as perfect as anything known in the ancient world.

The sides of the columns are covered with the grace-

ful Maya date-glyphs, and front and back are priestly figures of a dignity and calm worthy of Memnon himself. One, more beautiful than all the others, carries great wings, or a head-dress of feathers, high above the colossal head and seems to lift us, even as we stand in the jungle and look upon it, up toward the skies.

These are the ancestral heritages of the Indians who today serve the gods of the white man with the same devotion that they gave to those gods to whom they reared these wonderful monuments. At Quiriguá, before these monoliths, before the immense carved boulders which suggest some of the gems of Egypt or India, and before the pitiful ruined temples (innocent of the arch, and now only rude piles of masonry) we sense how deep those heritages must go into the Indian soul. After Quiriguá we cease to smile at the story of the Indian sun-worshipper who explained that he made obeisance to the Saints of the Holy Church because they, too, were of the sun and bore its symbol in the halo about their heads.

These, then, are the two Guatemalas which the Spaniards and the Indians built, each in his own way, on this wonderful site. The Mayas of old time chose this country for their own, out of all Central America and México, perhaps out of the whole hemisphere, and here, too, the Spaniards built their capital and created their centre of civilization. Today a new Guatemala is building on the favored sites, but with new tools and new rewards.

Here about us at Quiriguá are the literal miles of fields of the banana industry, and on its edges the great

new cattle industry, fat with promise. Behind us in the highlands are wheat and barley and sheep and beyond the highlands on the Pacific slope are the coffee *fincas*, the sugar and the maize. In those hills there are minerals, of a quality as yet only guessed, for, as the Guatemalans smilingly, and truthfully, explain to us, Estrada Cabrera so thoroughly controlled the importation of dynamite in order to prevent the manufacture of assassins' bombs that mining had not the opportunities for development which were left to the less dangerous industry of agriculture.

Guatemala is thus a land of the future as well as of the past, and through all her natural difficulties the promise of that future takes tangible form in the prosperity of individuals. But none the less, the current national situation is now only unfolding. Guatemala is today like a man with great assets which misfortune and his own unwisdom have kept from realization so long that his apparent condition has been in sharp contrast to his actual stability and to the brilliant future which he can not conceivably escape.

The vicious circle of wealth and trouble was manifested in nothing with more typical and illuminating cogency than in the national and private finance. The currency situation was for years completely beyond control. The great quantity of paper pesos, now worth two cents, where they were once worth fifty cents U. S. Cy., had burdened national and private finance to a point where the local banks, strong though they had been, seemed sometimes unable to cope with the perils inherent in the almost overmastering exchange situation.

Industrially, the inflated currency was beginning to collect substantial toll from those who once welcomed it. As everywhere, some elements in the population had felt that paper currency was a profitable and satisfactory means of "expanding the credit" necessary for handling the annual coffee crop and even of financing the development of that industry. The ability to print money and so to furnish the wealth needed for loans seemed very easy in the old days, particularly as the resulting fall in exchange seemed to be netting a handsome profit for planters who paid their labor in depreciating paper and sold their products in gold.

The day of retribution came, however, following the Great War, when there was no more of the German money (which the Germans had made easy to borrow because they were glad to take the properties if the mortgages went to foreclosure), when there was no more English money because England was leaving Central American loans to the United States, and when American bankers, apparently wanting neither lands nor trade, demanded guarantees and securities quite out of keeping with the banking methods of the traditional days of old.

Heavily, indeed, Guatemala had paid, and was paying, for the profits wrung from Indian laborers and native artisans through payment in depreciated currency. Always in the end living costs had been adjusted to falling exchange, but lowered private and national credit and the increased banking charges were factors which did not vary—their evils piled ever one upon the other. Most serious and important of all, strong foreign bankers did not come to Guatemala nor did they

seem likely to come while a fluctuating currency made it necessary for them to enter into phases of banking which are not regarded as legitimate in the conservative financial centres of the world.

Guatemala, nevertheless, sought many loans abroad, but it always encountered the basic difficulties that its budget was not balanced, that its income quoted in paper pesos meant something different today from what it meant last month, and that, also, it had not yet found a way to show in advance how it would collect the money which would be needed for the service of the loan which was wanted for the stabilization of the currency, even at an undoubted profit to the government.

More than all, perhaps, it was the lack of an adequate taxation system which presented in Guatemala, as in other Central American countries, the greatest difficulty in financing national loans abroad. Guatemala is a country of great landowners, and landowners have never been famous anywhere for their desire to tax themselves heavily. The result was that the taxation system in no way kept pace with the increase in the budgetary expenditures, and neither economy nor new sources of taxation seemed a possibility, politically, to assist in solving the great fiscal problems of the country.

For a financial situation like that of Guatemala becomes a political problem, and even a serious menace. Without political strength no government dared either economize or increase its sources of taxation, and the vicious circle followed around and back to the fact that this political weakness was due, in turn, to the failure to solve those same financial perplexities.

Yet Guatemala stands in so peculiar a relation to the world outside that it was inevitable that, some day, the country should be given the help which its position demanded,—help in sound new systems of taxation, in currency stabilization, and finally in favorable foreign loans. The currency was stabilized, in fact, in 1925, when the government issued the first metallic coins in many years,—the silver *quetzal*, worth an American dollar and equivalent to sixty old pesos, with gold coins of 20, 10 and 5 *quetzales*. A graduated new coffee tax marked, at that time, the beginning of the fund for the retirement of the old pesos—and met with little open opposition. The developments that have followed have been sometimes slow, but always in the line of progress. American financial interests have steadily become more interested, and have given that support to Guatemalan advancement which has at last opened this rich land to the whole world.

This support from the United States is, however, only a logical development of a relation grounded both in time and in a true community of interests. Guatemala is one of the traditional friends of the United States in Latin America. Its problems, whether political, social or fiscal, have always been of deep concern to the United States.

The strategic importance of Guatemala adds frankly to this interest of Washington. Guatemala is the gateway to the southern border of México, and the American naval base at Guatánamo, Cuba, is but two days away from the Caribbean coast of Guatemala. For these reasons, all the Guatemalan railway lines, from Puerto

Barrios on the Atlantic side to San José de Guatemala on the Pacific, to México on the north and to the Gulf of Fonseca (a protected harbor, which San José de Guatemala is not) are railways of great strategic importance to the United States, and so, it can be frankly accepted, to the peace of the Americas and of the Pacific.

In fact, wherever we turn in Central America's broader problems, two figures stand always side by side, those of Guatemala and the United States. In many ways Nicaragua is closer to the great Republic, but her closeness is that of an affectionate understanding, a free choice which the two nations made in 1912 to work out together the problems of a specific and significant partnership. Guatemala, on the other hand, is drawn to the United States by forces mightier than the choice of either, forces of geography and of common interest, whose currents run in deeper channels than can be put in words or expressed in treaties. One feels a thorough confidence, both in the continued friendship of the smaller and in the inevitable help of the stronger.

Our last morning in Guatemala City will wake us early, for again there is an all-day trip ahead. Yet never in any spot we have seen or shall ever see, will dawn be more lovely or color more sublime than on that day when we board the train at Guatemala City to go northward to take ship at Puerto Barrios for New Orleans or New York. Blue, as always, will gleam the peaked volcanoes, and the precious setting of green verdure in which the capital stands will be the lovelier because it is our last view of it. Every bit of the country and every bit of the life that belongs there will delight

us, from the blue mountains down to the market-woman below our car window, with a wide basket on her head, loaded to its overflowing sides with big-leafed blue cabbages! Symbol, in substantial and amusing reality, of Guatemala's blue gardens!

As our train carries us from her capital, and as our boat carries us away from her port, Guatemala fades into the majesty of her blue distances. Yet she remains chiselled in memory, with the clear perfection of the carvings of her own Maya monuments. But her precious color merges into the rainbow itself, clear, always, as are the other colors we have looked on, but the whole greater and more beautiful than any of its parts.

CHAPTER VIII

POTS OF GOLD

THERE is a fairy legend of the pots of gold at rainbow's end, hidden in brambles, waiting the quest of knight or pioneer. The metaphor seems fitting, with the rainbow of Central America. Two pots there would be, one full of the gold of raw materials, foods and produce, and the other of trade, national development and individual opportunity. Both would be hidden in the brambles of fear of risk, ignorance of how great the reward, misunderstanding of how genuine the need.

Today, Central America's wealth is part of the world's anodyne. Food and raw materials and markets are the vital necessities of an industrial civilization. For manufacturing, the world needs raw materials; for markets, it needs the lands that produce raw materials. Today we are finding that we can no longer seek either raw materials or markets in Europe and the United States alone, nor alone in Canada or Australia or Alaska. We are beginning to awake, rather dazed, to the new opportunities, and to the new needs, of the tropics, man's cradle since history began, his one unfailing source of supply, and always his richest market.

In Central America there are these two great factors: astonishing accessibility as well as tropical exu-

berance. Due to the long coast-line, and to the proximity of the important new trade routes, Central America is literally the most accessible, the richest and most varied of the tropical regions awaiting development today.

First, however, it is high time to look closely at this matter of the tropics and their promise. The crush of problems in Europe is forcing the view outward, but the drama of the tropics which is about to unfold has long been foreseen. In 1898, when Rudyard Kipling was writing "The White Man's Burden," Benjamin Kidd, economist and sociologist, was writing in the same vein, if somewhat more technically. His "Social Evolution" was a handbook of the intelligentsia of that day, but I refer to a little known work, called "The Control of the Tropics." There he set down these prophetic phrases:

> It is not improbable that to the future observer one of the curious features of our time will appear to be the same prevailing unconsciousness of the real nature of the issues in the midst of which we are living. . . . The great rivalry of the future is already upon us. It is for the control of the tropics, not indeed for possession in the ordinary sense of the word, for that is an idea beyond which the more advanced peoples of the world have moved, but for the control of these regions according to certain (other) standards.[1]

The struggle for the torrid lands is not new; it is as old as Columbus, as Prince Henry the Navigator, as Genghis Khan, and older. All history has been woven on the warp of the story of the tropics, because the empires of ancient and more recent time have all been

[1] Benjamin Kidd, *The Control of the Tropics,* The Macmillan Co., New York, 1898, p. 3.

built on the tropics' priceless gifts. The desert pomp of Nineveh and Babylon drew its majesty and glory, a thousand years before men had learned to multiply their labor by machines, primarily from the unearned food supply by which the date-palm loosed thousands of workers for the building of great canals and noble cities. Egypt floated to greatness on the annual overflows of the Nile, Greece on the ships with which it tapped the wealth of Egypt, Asia and Africa, Rome by the tribute from its southern, not its northern, provinces. So on down to Spain itself, with its vast Americas, and to the empires of Portugal and Holland in the Orient.

Only in our time, when man founded a complicated existence on coal and steam, did civilization come to be free from the tropics—or rather to dream that it was free. It was, at best, only a dream, for the luxuries of proud Europe have always come from the tropics and again, as troubles have piled themselves high on our precarious structure of industrialism, European civilization is groping to a realization that it must conceivably find its way out by turning to the source from which man has ever drawn his strength and power in the time of his great crises,—it must turn to the tropics.

The tropical world of promise covers a vast area of the earth's surface, and yet a relatively small portion has been or can be brought to work with the industrial civilization of the temperate zone. Those tropical countries that are destined for our civilization's work are, however, marked out for each age by elements beyond the mere caprice of man's choice. Here, then, we return to geography, for geography is the greatest of

teachers. Neither history nor experience nor philosophy can give us such sound bases for our deductions and our hopes as a map of the world printed and glued upon a pasteboard globe.

If we find Central America on such a globe and take a pair of compasses and swing them about, north and south and east and west, we discover how closely this territory is related to the great ports of the world. We find that it is as accessible to Europe as the islands of the Caribbean, closer than México, more easily reached than Venezuela or Colombia, and intimately connected with that network of commerce and supplies that centres at the Panamá canal.

The relationship, geographically, of Central America to the United States is also of immense significance, as the map on the globe tells us eloquently. Through many years it has been all but ignored, but in just the ratio that it has been ignored, has the progress of Central America been delayed. The world outside the United States may not like the preponderance of American influence in Central America, but that influence is as vital to the security of the relations of the outside world as to Central America itself. Geography has created that relationship, and the same forces have made it practicable for good.

Central America is the tip of a strategic triangle, the base of which is the whole continental United States, and the sides the ship lines and the seacoast from San Francisco on the west and from New York and New Orleans (via the naval base at Guatánamo, Cuba) on the east. México is unimportant in this strategy, but

Central America is vital, for that triangle guards the peace of the Panamá canal and the coveted isolation of all the Americas.

Central America could not progress unless the United States were its friend; it cannot fail to progress economically, with advantage to all, when such a friendship is recognized and accepted, not alone in Central America but in Europe as well. A British banker, interested in Central America, hearing me once quote Baron von Humboldt's declaration that Guatemala was "the garden of America," quickly replied, "But the Americans won't mind our playing in their garden, will they?" The play of words on the English designation of the United States as "America" was clever, but it was more than that; wise Europeans have waited long for the United States to take the place of friend to Central America which no other nation can take.

The geography of the lands themselves also indicates Central America's destiny as one of the first foci of modern tropical development. If we skirt the world around along the broad green belt which marks the torrid zone, we shall find no other region so ready, today, for its work. Tropical Africa, for instance, is still a relative wilderness of rich but undeveloped territory, into which ships can penetrate but a little way, even in its rivers, and still requiring immense expenditures of money and of time to build the railways to bring the "dark continent" into the world. Central America, by contrast, is accessible by a coast-line longer in proportion to its size (as one can see by any map) than almost any other continental area, bringing its highlands every-

where to within only a few hours of its seaports. The seas are still the world's highways, and ships, not railway cars, the modern as well as the ancient caravans. All this Central America knows, even as it dreams and struggles for its two-hundred-mile transcontinental railways, and its twenty-mile commercial turnpikes.

Going around the world from Africa, we reach southern India and the Isles of Spice. Here the world has sailed and fought and intrigued for centuries, probably for unwritten millenniums, for the wealth of the tropics. And while these romantic regions still yield, they do so under a long-crystallized system of wage and plantation slavery, and through cordons of misunderstanding which make their destiny, perhaps for longer than we shall know, that of a service which destroys them as markets even as it increases production. Central America, on the other hand, has no teeming populations, and a great part of its problem is traceable to an actually foreign system of wage slavery that Central America has inherited, merely by the custom of men's thinking, from these same Isles of Spice.

Still around the world, we pass North Australia and New Guinea, at the portals, still, of modern development. The problems in Central America will be of value untold, there, when Central America can hand its answers to its problems to the white Commonwealth. So the Philippines, now struggling to compete with Oklahoma, and so the lesser islands of the Pacific.

Then, last, the Antilles, prizes of old trade-wars, seats of romance and object of a thousand buccaneering expeditions and of a hundred treaties. They float, serene, in

their lovely Caribbean, bathed by the trade winds, and waiting, still, the magic hand of him who can solve their problems. Meanwhile, they are the most vulnerable as well as perhaps the most precious of all the territories ruled by human governments.

In this alone they give the palm to Central America, which is a fortress, if it choose, a firm Gibraltar, not a Sicily or an Ireland. The world must pass that way, via Panamá or via Nicaragua, when both the waterways are built, and under the guns or under the smiles of Central America,—as case may be. Truly, Central America has its mightier place, geographically, than the solidity of Africa, than the slavery of the Indies or the vulnerability of the Antilles is likely soon to permit to them.

Compared, too, with northern South America. The countries of South America are continental. They bring the wall of their wilderness to the very edges of the Atlantic, the Caribbean and the Pacific, and challenge the traveler to enter, even as they tempt him with riches and beauties untold, in Amazons and Orinocos still unexplored, valleys of gorgeous birds and flowers, mines of age-old tradition, and oil wells jealously guarded. All this is South America, but it is not, could not be, Central America. For Central America, from its mountain tops to its green seas on either side, is close, close to the great world, and its riches wait the hand of the sower, not the expeditionary ambitions of the explorer. It is a rare land, this Central America, close and so easily important to the life of us all, with the ships that can bring its beef and wheat and rice and maize as

easily as they today bring its bananas by their hundred millions of bunches, to the ports of our world.

But now as we come closer, geography becomes geology, and the hills of the coast and the highlands of the interior become a detailed picture as reassuring to the practical-minded as the etching on a banknote. In many ways Central America is all tropical America in miniature. There is the broad, extremely fertile, well watered Atlantic plain, cut by chains of hills sometimes running down to the coast, often leaving valleys which penetrate far into the hill country along the banks of the rivers. On this coast the wet season is usually nine months long, and storage dams and irrigation a distinct possibility almost everywhere throughout the whole rich area.

Rising gradually, the coastal plain meets the eastern cordillera, beyond whose long ridges lie the plateaux of the central mountain regions. In some of the countries, like Guatemala and, in lesser degree, Costa Rica, the highland plain is broad, well watered and capable of an agricultural development which it is to a certain extent already enjoying. In others, of which Nicaragua is typical, the highland is relatively rugged, and the agricultural cultivation limited to small units. The cordillera, or continental mountain chain, runs generally in two ridges, paralleling each other, with the high temperate-clime plateau between. So they traverse the length of Central America as they have run the length of North America and will continue as the backbone of the hemisphere to the southern tip of Chile and Argentina.

The western slope of the mountains is sharp in Cen-

tral America, as it is throughout the hemisphere, and the Pacific plain is relatively shallow. Yet here again is a territory rich and varied, and if it is richer and more finely cultivated in Salvador and in Guatemala, it is none the less as capable of intelligent development by irrigation in the three more southern countries.

In these varied altitudes we have the heat and the deserts or dank forests of the tropics, and rising above them every grade of temperate clime with every qualification of the temperate zone excepting winter snows for their wheat-fields. It seems fair to believe that when science lends a hand, the long growing season will give these highlands two annual crops of temperate zone products, even of wheat itself, just as today well-regulated farm-lands of the tropics raise two and even three crops of maize.

Science, indeed, seems the only problem of those who will come to develop this rich land. It offers them its wealth of fertility, its wonder of climate, its unlimited (if sometimes exuberant) rainfall, its streams for irrigation, and its soils, gumbo and loam and volcanic ash, for the choice of scientists, agriculturists, engineers and modern machinery designers who hold the keys that together will unlock the flood-gates of Central America's prosperity.

Central America is producing, today, much wealth of agriculture, and yet today's product is only an earnest of what is to come. As we note these crops, however, it is interesting to realize that the countries are almost one in the nature of their products as well as in the problems that their material development presents.

Maize and the red and black beans of the common diet are raised in all the countries. Wheat is grown in Guatemala and to a limited extent in Costa Rica. Rice is an important produce of Salvador; Guatemala and Nicaragua also raise rice, but Costa Rica imports large quantities from Salvador. Sugar is now made in all the countries in increasing quantities, some of it of high export standard. Bananas (of which more in another chapter) are grown in all the countries, and, excepting in Salvador, for export to the United States and Europe; in Nicaragua the industry is still in its infancy, but in the three other countries it is of immense importance. Coffee is the great native crop throughout Central America, Honduras having the smallest, Guatemala and Salvador the largest, production; of coffee and its future there will also be more to say in later pages. Cacao is raised in small quantities, chiefly now for local consumption, although Costa Rica has a growing export industry, and Nicaragua and Salvador also export the chocolate bean.

Chicle, the base of chewing gum, is gathered and shipped from the jungles of Guatemala and Honduras. Other gums include the precious "balsam of Perú" (which all comes from Salvador) the most wonderful of all healing balms.

Rubber is shipped from Nicaragua and Guatemala, but there are no planted trees, and the quantities are small. All the countries are, probably, well adapted to plantation rubber growing, and excepting for the tradition of lack of labor, might already be the scene of extensive new developments, for their proximity to the

The Terraced Wheat-fields of the highlands of Guatemala.

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The alfalfa crop—five crops a year—hopes to be a rival of coffee in the Central American highlands. It is, however, still "all hand worked."

United States makes them peculiarly fitted for the sites of immense new plantations.

Dyestuffs were once a famous product of Central America. Today they include only the indigo of Salvador, a dwindling industry, and some logwood from Nicaragua. The cochineal production of Guatemala, which was one of the notable industries under the Spaniards, has now virtually disappeared before the competition of synthetic dyes. The Indian weavers themselves use aniline dyes even for their gorgeous crimson woolens.

Cocoanuts, oil and copra are shipped, but in small quantities, although sections in all the countries would offer convenient and probably most satisfactory locations for copra plantations. Some native varieties of the smaller and richer oil nuts grow wild, but with insufficient annual production to make the exploitation of the wild crops profitable.

Of timber all the countries produce quantities. For export, the chief varieties are, of course, Spanish cedar and mahogany, although less well-known cabinet woods abound and are cut and shipped in small quantity. Native woodworkers use large amounts, of cedar chiefly. There is pine in quantity, some even now accessible by motor lorries during the dry season, in the highlands of Guatemala and Honduras. Costa Rica is largely denuded in the strip of the country which is now accessible by railroad, but both in the Costa Rican back country and in the upper regions of Nicaragua there are quantities of excellent pine of large growth. The development of all this region waits, however, on roads. The rivers will bring out tropical hardwoods, but in the

tropics the pine usually grows too high in the mountains to be transported in this manner, with the strange exception, it is said, of the Wonq River in Nicaragua, where long-leafed pine forests are said to border the navigable stream, close to sea level.

Honduras (and to a lesser extent Nicaragua) is a producer of cattle on the range, with an ever-growing stock of large beef animals, which makes the supply almost inexhaustible, under present demands, at least. Guatemala is also a cattle producer, but it also imports, chiefly from Honduras, and fattens on its broad pastures, both for home consumption and for export to México. Costa Rica imports lean cattle, driven overland from Nicaragua, and Salvador also imports its meat animals (although Salvador has no ranges for fattening). The cattle stocks of Central America certainly suggest, however, that the next decade should see a great new industry of fattening in the lush tropical pastures and slaughtering beef in Central America, to be shipped as fresh chilled meat to México, Europe, and even to the United States. The subject of cattle raising, however, also demands attention in later pages.

Tobacco is raised in a casual fashion in most of the countries, but that of Honduras is most esteemed and Honduran cigars and cigarettes are sold in all the countries.

Of the great tropical and semi-tropical fibre plants, first place should go to cotton, although cotton growing in Central America is as yet one of the minor industries. The cotton plant thrives, and reaches a large size, for in the absence of frost it enjoys a continuous growing

season. In some of the countries cotton is raised systematically on a small scale and in Guatemala there is a large native cotton mill near Quezaltenango which uses some native cotton, although most of its stock is imported. Salvador is just beginning to take up the industry, with considerable promise of success.

The wool of Guatemala is one of the unique Indian industries of the country. It is raised on the highlands from tiny sheep descended (in more ways than one) from the Merino stocks introduced by the Spaniards, and is woven on hand looms for the clothing not only of the Indians but of the most of the male population of the country. The product is coarse and usually harsh, owing to much kemp in the clip, but the cloth is unquestionably "pure wool." Conventional tweed patterns are followed on the hand looms and the goods sold in the Guatemala City market are made up skilfully by native tailors into serviceable, if very "baggy," lounge suits and overcoats. Silk has been produced in small quantities in Salvador for many years, and some effort has been made to introduce it in the other countries.

Henequén, or sisal hemp, is raised in Salvador, and some in Honduras. All the other countries, as well, produce fibres of a similar nature for their own rope making. No Manila hemp or jute is produced, although the plants would probably grow well. The hundreds of thousands of jute bags used annually for coffee and sugar in Central America are imported ready made, chiefly from Great Britain.

The mining industry is relatively limited in Central America today, but in the time of the Spaniards it was,

in certain sections, a fair producer, although eclipsed by the vast tribute from Perú and México. Today there are only two large, producing, mining properties in Central America, one in Costa Rica and one in Honduras. Both ship gold and silver, mostly to the United States. Guatemala and Honduras have the greatest territory of promising prospects, and possibly substantial future as mining countries. The dynamite monopoly of President Estrada Cabrera in Guatemala is blamed for the present backward condition of the industry there, but equally potent, probably, is the absence of bonanza traditions. The modern miner in Latin America long since learned that where the Spanish miners did not succeed, there is little likelihood of a less persistent prospector finding rich new veins. During the Great War manganese was produced in Costa Rica, and chrome ore in Guatemala, but these industries have dwindled, as the cost of production there does not justify their mining at normal prices.

These, then, are the productions of today. Those of the future, as has been suggested many times, are almost unlimited. The wheat of the highlands of Guatemala indicates that the great food grain will grow well there. The maize already planted in great acreage leaves no limit to its potentialities. Rice and sugar are increasing crops. One need hardly stop short of predicting that not one staple product of the temperate zone can fail to grow here, and probably in quality and quantity justifying its serious adoption as a Central American crop.

One word only of the significant field of by-products. The example is industrial alcohol, a natural by-product

of the sugar industry, even of the coffee industry (for the soft pulps of the coffee berries ferment and produce a fair alcohol). The search the world over will be, within measurable time, for non-foodstuffs which will produce alcohol for automobile engines and for industry. Central America has a great number of plants and fruits which may well be tested for such a purpose. Here, again, one can only point toward lines along which men are already thinking, and where the busy experts of many branches will, in time, take their way.

In the list outlined here it is interesting to note that there is competition in the world's markets between the various countries, but no clash of interests in the type of products to which they devote themselves. All are interested to a greater or less extent in coffee, and all excepting Salvador in the banana trade, while for balance, say, Salvador has its balsam and its indigo in which it is unique, but which do not influence the national attitude toward problems common to the sister countries.

Not that there is no trade between the countries of Central America, but this is confined largely to the transshipment of cattle and the sale of foodstuffs. Here, incidentally, is a minor conflict of interests, which has its bearing on the economic situation in Costa Rica, at least. That country imports not inconsiderable quantities of maize, beans and rice from Nicaragua and Salvador, the while it devotes the larger proportion of its population to coffee growing. This fact has had considerable bearing on the question of free trade, which might justly be looked for in the relationship of these countries with one another. Costa Rica sends its sister

countries nothing, in exchange for what it buys from them, and Costa Rica is not unnaturally the chief voice—and so far a deciding vote—against free trade and reciprocity agreements.

Actual figures which would give a picture of the total productions of Central America are entirely lacking and even the statistics of imports and exports are both incomplete and inaccurate. It has seemed wisest not to include here tables which at their best are only approximate. The import statistics of the various countries are so varied in classification and so entirely original in the valuations set as to be generally misleading, except when studied in extreme detail. Export figures have the same difficulty, as is found in comparing them with the corresponding statistics of imports from these countries into the United States and the United Kingdom.

Import and export statistics are easily obtainable, in the most reliable form available, from the annual reports of the Pan American Union, Washington, D. C. These are sent free to inquirers anywhere in the world, as the Union is not a bureau of the United States government, but of all the governments of the Americas.[1]

The figures of the Union are, it must be noted, compiled from native sources. They are thus subject not only to the great differences in local prices but to the inaccuracies that creep into their compilation in Central America. Through their necessary reduction to

[1] The statistical bulletins are distinct from the "General Descriptive Data" booklets also issued by the Union, referred to elsewhere as sent for 5 cents in America and 7 cents elsewhere. The statistical bulletins are for each country, and a general one for all Latin America. They should be asked for by name, as "Commerce of Nicaragua," "Commerce of Costa Rica," etc.

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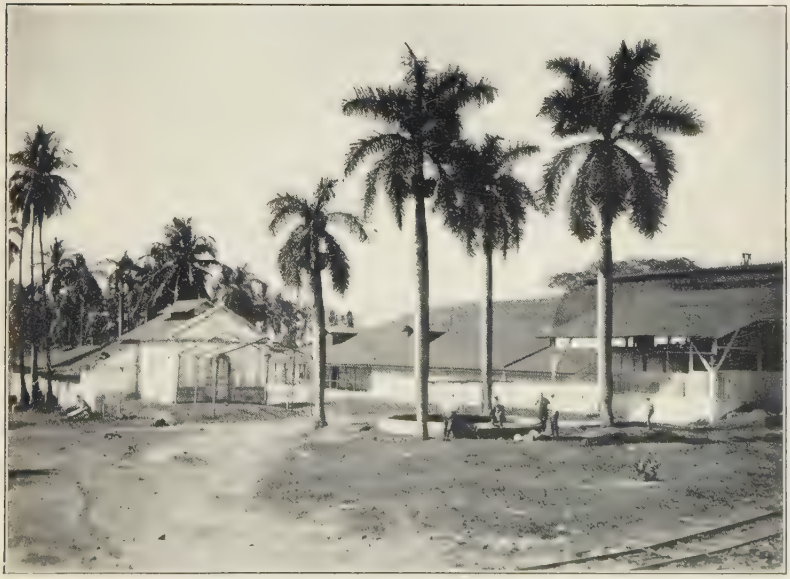
On a sugar-railway on a Central American plantation. In the background is a grove of banana trees.



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The sugar-mill at Pantaleón hacienda, with its famous Royal palms, and, to the left, the tiny plantation chapel.

the basic American dollar, such accuracy as there was in the beginning is much reduced. This is due to custom as well as carelessness. Although there has been fluctuating exchange in recent years, in all the countries, the reduction of the figures to dollars was, by custom, made only on the basis of the annual *average* of exchange, with inevitable appalling inaccuracies.

It may be taken that of the figures obtainable those of Nicaragua and Salvador are virtually complete and accurate. Nicaragua has had a gold standard since 1911 and her customs have been administered by trained men from abroad. Salvador has been on a gold basis since 1918 and has, moreover, the best statistical department of any of the Central American countries. The figures of Honduras are subject both to the fluctuations of silver exchange and to inaccurate methods of compilation. The Guatemalan figures suffered hopelessly from the inaccuracy incident to the violent fluctuations of its paper currency until the *quetzal* became the standard of value, in 1925. A slightly similar situation has existed in Costa Rica, where the paper money varies irregularly.

The credit side of the balance of Central America, however, weighs solidly by any commercial standards which can be applied to it. What, then, of the debits? There are a few which must be set against the great credits of nature's bounty, for nature has not given Central America quite *all* the types of wealth.

First is the lack of native fuel supplies. There is neither petroleum nor coal in Central America. It is still possible that petroleum in paying quantities will be

found in Costa Rica (where drilling is now going on) and there are indications of its presence in the midst of the wilderness of Petén in northern Guatemala, concessions for which are being developed by American interests. These suggest, however, only that petroleum may yet be found along the Caribbean coast. On the Pacific slope, and therefore through the accessible and populated sections of the countries, there is said to be no possibility that petroleum will ever be found, as the rocks are igneous, and the formation so completely volcanic that the likelihood even of pockets of oil is extremely small.

The lack of fuel leads to another economic debit, the absence of native cement, as without cheap fuel the manufacture of cement, even from the best adapted limestones, is extremely expensive. Cement is, moreover, the ideal building material in an earthquake country. It is also the ideal material for the construction of roads across tropical swamps, and indeed for all roads which must endure through the downpours of the torrential rainy season. Lower prices for fuel oil may come through tariff adjustment, or cement may in time be made by the use of electric heat, but as yet electricity has not been produced, even with such water-power as Central America expects to harness, at prices which justify this use. Certainly, there are limestones in Central America well adapted to cement manufacture; the ancient Mayas used a cement which they made by burning limestone with wood, producing a product so efficient that to this day many of their rubble masonry structures are virtually monoliths of solid stone.

The climate, with its heavy rains, and its hot dry season in most sections of Central America, has disadvantages not to be passed over lightly. A tropical climate is a cruel enemy, cruel in the very moments that it is richly generous, for while it brings forth great crops it still wipes out all the progress that man makes in his battle against the forces of climatic disintegration, and again and again delays and seemingly ruins the planter. But does all this not seem serious, perhaps, only because men still carry on all agriculture by the standards of the temperate zone? Is it not possible that the science of tropical agriculture is just begun, and that we shall see, in our time, an almost complete reversal of conventional systems by some newer code, which will make full use of the long, sure, sharply defined seasons?

Certainly, it is not entirely fantastic to hope that tropical agriculture may some day be made surer and safer than the agriculture of the uncertain weathers of the temperate zone. If this could be, certainly it would give a new lease of life, and a new hope with which we might move serenely forward to the service the tropics have so long waited to give, in their own great way, to the world which needs them. Nor is it merely a hope. Central America is today well covered by tropical agricultural experts, sent out in generous numbers by the United States government, by local Central American governments, and by private institutions, to study just these problems. Shall any of us say that these capable, serious, enthusiastic young men will not find the answer to

even the problems of rains and droughts and bugs and birds and crops that may be presented to them?

There are also the difficulties that the people themselves place in the way of the very progress which spells both the development of agriculture and of mining, and the increase of national well-being. We hear of revolutions, of the uncertainties of politics—something is said of both in later pages. But we need not be unthinking optimists to find in the Central American revolution little to worry the foreigner—and increasingly less for him to fear as the years go on. Increasing stability from within is building a solid native bulwark against such upheavals, and the limitation of United States military interest in Central America, deliberately to the protection of foreign lives and property if danger comes, serves well to guarantee the future.

Casting up the balance of Central America seems easier when all the good and all the bad are laid out together, and when we so look on them, the need of Central America's development as the next great tropical storehouse seems axiomatic. For the good seems to loom vast and eternal, the evils to be meagre and temporary.

CHAPTER IX

PAGEANT OF AGRICULTURE

Central America does not glory in the unearned wealth of natural production alone. It has rich storehouses, but it yields their treasures only to industry—and intelligence. In earliest history, the Maya Empire was imperiled by the problems of a food supply that had to be wrested from this soil with inadequate tools, and century after century the Maya populations migrated on long treks in search of virgin lands, where their stone tools would bring them livelihood. As a Spanish colony, Central America's problems were already of production, not of conquest of wealth already achieved. Today, as in those older days, the wealth of these fertile lands is earned at the price of toil, industry and organization.

The populations of these countries are and have always been industrious and intelligent far above the capacities of their training. The yoke of tradition, custom and limited opportunity has held them, so that today a sage and sympathetic observer has justly said that this capable population works at but sixty per cent of its own real efficiency.

Today Central America is balked, not by poverty or by tropical inertia—for neither is characteristic—but

by the enslavement of its energies and its fertility to antiquated methods and wasteful crops. So, too, salvation will come, not from without but from within. Central America waits on those changes in methods and in goal that will fairly harness its capabilities to the scientific, balanced production of the great food crops and primary products which the world needs from the Isthmus countries, and which in turn will build and strengthen these countries and their peoples.

The story that carries us from the problems of the present into this destined power of the future is literally a pageant. Coffee, in mediæval splendor, begins the panorama.

The raising of coffee is one of the élite amongst agricultural enterprises. It is comparable to fruit growing in the temperate zone, and its plantations, located at the most salubrious altitudes in the tropics, give to the plantation owner the ease of life of the true country gentleman—or of the mediæval baron. The costs of production are, however, relatively high and the conditions to which its labor is subjected (in order to keep down that one phase of production cost) are none too conducive to the nocturnal rest of a conscientious plantation owner. Human misery is a concomitant of the plantation system, and it often enters into coffee growing to an extent far out of proportion to returns in profits.

The plantation system as it operates in Guatemala is, for instance, a definitely destructive system, because the coffee growers are convinced that they cannot produce their crop unless labor is cheap. To this end labor in Guatemala has been for generations, and is today, en-

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He prefers to make his pottery and carry it to market on his own back, rather than pick the coffee of the white man.

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The cocoanut is both a drink and a sweetmeat—and a great potential source of oil for the soap factories of the world.

slaved by laws and customs evolved for the solitary profit of the coffee industry, on the theory that without such conditions the Indians would never consent to do the work of the coffee industry.

The Salvador plantation system has no wage slavery, indeed, and the money paid the workers is actually a living wage, which is not always true in Guatemala. But Salvador has its own plantation evils, in the not uncommon lack of consideration of the health and living conditions of the workers. This is a situation which, in the long run, may yet bring about something approaching the destruction of the coffee industry by indignant labor itself in a country where the workers are so active and so capable of plain thinking as in Salvador. In Nicaragua, coffee growing is to a large extent carried on as it is in Guatemala, but the workers themselves "solve" some of their problems, by wasteful and destructive picking methods and a carelessness which the planters try vainly to trace to some other trait than the low wages that have made carelessness degenerate into universal custom.

Costa Rica, although wages are higher, has apparently been caught most seriously of all in the vicious circle of the plantation system. This is probably because Costa Rica has now reached the point where that system has begun to threaten the national coffee business. By devoting all its energies to coffee growing Costa Rica has abandoned its food crops and is today importing much of the food for its agricultural laborers. For this food the country is paying prices which make it actually far more expensive to the workers than

similar foods are in England or the United States, where all wages are of course many times those of the Costa Rican coffee picker.

The plantation system, evil in its essentials, brings in its wake an endless train of other evils. It does not even make for higher land values—or cheaper production. Actually, it works in quite the opposite direction, and even in Central America values of coffee land of equal richness and productivity vary almost in exact ratio to the local tyranny of the plantation system; land in Salvador, for instance, is worth twice as much as equally good land in Guatemala, where labor is cheaper but where the accompanying conditions are worse.

If, in addition, we take into account the need of peculiar land at a special altitude, the costs of transportation and the high interest rates that are exacted because of the precarious nature of the crop (and of the labor supply) we find the net result is that coffee plantations are relatively small producers of wealth—judged by the acreage return. A successful fruit orchard in the Northwest of the United States pays many times the profit per acre of an equally successful coffee *finca* in Central America.

Coffee, being a plantation crop, suffers from the wasteful marketing difficulties of all plantation crops. With every right to be considered and paid for as a luxury, coffee has become one of the staples of commerce, for its prices are based, not on values, but on artificially maintained markets. But the wealth of Central America cannot continue to be dependent on cheap labor or the plantation system. Indeed, unless that wealth is soon

developed so as to make soil and climate and location give full return, Central America will fall behind, in the sordid competition of cheap labor, before the savage Negroes of Africa and the coolies of the East Indies.

This is a radically new view of the situation in Central American agriculture. Still clinging to the idea of cheap labor, economists of Central America discuss solemnly even the question of importing labor from British India to supply the need for cheap workers on Central American plantations. This is begging the question, for the real future of Central America lies inevitably in its intelligent use of the power and wonderful resources which it has and not in the perpetuation of its mistakes by such subterfuges as the importation of a cheaper labor to a land which is already suffering from the evils of low wages.

Foreign labor has, however, been imported into Central America for many years. The reference is of course to the Negro workers on the banana plantations, but there seems a great difference in the cases. While the labor of Jamaican and other West Indian Negroes has built the banana industry of Central America, it has not lowered the wage scale nor the standard of living of the native workers. Wherever, in Central America, there are banana plantations, the price of labor is always higher than in other parts of the very countries in which those plantations are located. The example of Guatemala is sufficient. On the west coast (the coffee country) railway section hands are paid twenty to thirty pesos a day (forty to sixty cents U.S. Cy.) while on the east coast, where the railway competes with the banana

plantations for labor, the native Guatemalan section hand is paid forty pesos (eighty cents U.S. Cy.) a day, and food in addition.

The importation of this Negro labor into Central America needs perhaps an explanation. The Negroes of the British West Indies are of course the direct descendants of the slaves brought from Africa during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. They have done the manual labor of the tropics of the Caribbean practically ever since. They furnished much of the labor for the Panamá canal, and have given their lives as well as their labor to the construction of the railways which lead up from the Caribbean coast to the highlands of Central America.

The Indians of these countries have long had a well-known aversion to working on the broad coastal plain bordering the Caribbean. This is due largely to traditions which go far back in their history, that these sections are unhealthful and that no Indians of their tribes have ever survived a long residence there. Modern sanitation and happier experience have changed all these conditions, but the tradition is still general, and in Guatemala, which might well be looked to to furnish labor for the banana plantations, the highland Indians are only now beginning to go for short periods, to work on the Atlantic coastlands.

From the very first the Negro has done the work of the banana plantations and to this day he is the chief worker, and English is the standard language of the banana country. In Guatemala he is to a limited extent being displaced by the city-bred mixed-bloods, and now

by Indians; in Honduras there are some 10,000 Salvadoreans and many Guatemalans who have migrated under contract to work on the American banana properties of the north coast. In Costa Rica, however, the Negro continues to be almost the only banana laborer, and there seems no question but that he will long continue to hold his own in the banana country of the entire Isthmus.

Throughout the fifty years of the banana business in the Caribbean the tendency has been to escape as far as possible from the tradition of cheap labor's vital importance to profitable tropical agriculture, and at the same time from the tyranny of dependence upon such labor. Bananas, although they are very high in food value, and compare, in production per acre of food units, with maize itself, are in Central America still a primary crop, in the sense that they are planted immediately after the felling of the virgin forest.

Being a primary crop in this sense it would seem only logical to expect that the banana industry would be as wasteful as is the tradition of the tropics in so many of its industries. But the banana business depends not so much on the mere fertility of the soil or the plethoric outpouring of its fruits as upon the management of its cutting and distribution.

Because of their marketing problems the greatest of the banana companies, the United Fruit Company, long ago arranged the geographical distribution of its plantations and the sailings of its many ships to the sole end of serving its markets intelligently and continuously. All the fruit companies have also introduced machinery to an astonishing degree in the handling of their perish-

able product. Where the coffee grower of Central America transports his valuable crop on the backs of men or mules, or in ox-carts, the fruit company builds tramways into the heart of its jungle-like farm, tramways over which cars may travel only one day a week, and yet in that one day pay for themselves in the quickness and care with which they transport the bananas to shipside. Railway spurs are driven into the jungle, and the whistle of the locomotive of the banana trains is heard in the midst of otherwise unpenetrated wildernesses.

These are commonplaces of the adaptation of machinery to the loading and unloading of this delicate and perishable crop. But, more than that, the fruit companies have built efficient deep-water ports on the edges of the jungle. There the ships tie up at wharves where twenty years ago an Indian dugout canoe could hardly be anchored. On these wharves are machines operated by steam, manipulating endless chains which carry bunches of bananas in soft canvas cradles from the banana trains (which have been switched out upon the dock) to the hold of the ship. Everywhere machinery is used where it would save human labor or make the handling of the fruit quicker and safer.

All this is "mad Americanism" both to the native of the tropic zone and even to the eye of the observer from beyond the seas. Why, ask both of them, in a land where human labor is cheap, should machines be used to save labor? The traditional type of planter, and even some modern engineers in Central America, always complain that the use of machines is more expensive than

wasteful employment of human backs and arms. From India and from Japan they draw their examples, just as they will tell you solemnly that it is much cheaper to have a peon workman cutting the grass on their lawn with a bit of tin than it would be to employ an imported lawnmower, as that would require a foreign mechanic to operate it! Yet here is the largest and most efficiently managed tropical industry in the world, using machinery at every turn and indeed using it more completely in the tropics than it is allowed to use it by labor unions in the port of New York!

The message of the banana to the student of tropical problems is eloquent in almost every phase. Here is a great commercial business handling from Central America alone more than 30,000,000 bunches of bananas each year. It has been built out of absolutely nothing but the bare jungle, storm-swept and miasmic, which had been deserted probably a thousand years before the fruit companies came by the Indians who once thickly inhabited these borders of the Caribbean Sea. The banana trade rests primarily, of course, upon tropical fertility, but it endures and prospers upon that foundation because of the vision of far-sighted merchants and the precision of scientific experts. And, last, this very use of the labor of the tropics (cheap even at wages far above the standards of other tropical industries) to operate its machines makes the business more profitable than it could ever have been had the fruit companies confined themselves to the use of the same workers under the typical old "plantation system."

Bananas, a plantation crop, would thus indicate that

by the use of machines (and the machines of the banana industry had to be invented especially for that industry) plantation crops might yet be made productive without extorting the toll of human misery. But while we plan and can confidently look forward to such an era, when motor trucks will entirely supplant ox-carts, and some as yet undiscovered mechanical means might even supplant the hand-picking of the coffee berries—while we wait that era there is still something broader to be done. This is the development to the cultivation of the great food crops other than bananas.

The need will be, in the first place, for an escape from the plantation system, when the workers of Central America come to demand greater freedom, broader rights. The coffee planters may well be forced, ultimately, to surrender (through their labor's refusal to suffer longer) their place in the coffee industry to Brazil and in the distant future, to Africa, with their cheaper costs. The banana plantations may in places give way to pineapples, cacao, and tropical timbers in orchard growths.

But Central America will, in many other regions, turn to agricultural beginnings it has not yet seen, and cattle raising cover large areas with the incomparable tropical fodder grasses. Thus will begin the pageant from cattle raising to maize, rice and sugar, and on to cotton and then, by the inevitable stages of civilized history, perhaps ultimately to the era of diversified industry.

The Central American cattle industry is already more than a mere possibility. Since the days of the Spaniards these countries have been producers of cattle. Hondu-

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Honduran cattle fattened on Guatemalan pastures, ready to feed not only Central America but the whole export world when opportunity comes.

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Sugar-cane grows in a pale green sea, and is harvested by picturesque natives with two-foot, sword-like knives.

ras and Nicaragua have always raised range animals and have produced by the thousands the work-oxen and much of the food of their neighboring countries. During the Great War this production was extended, for markets opened for those busy years in Cuba, in the Caribbean countries and even in the United States.

Twenty years ago, the almost wild cattle of these highlands were counted upon, by the Central Americans, to furnish them great profit from the opening of the Panamá canal. As they saw it, these cattle were to be the meat supply of the ships that were to coal and provision themselves in great numbers at Panamá when the canal was finished. There was, as a result, not a little disappointment in Central America when it was discovered that the passenger ships and even the freighters that took on food at Panamá preferred refrigerated meat from Chicago to that of the scrawny live range cattle which were all that Central America could then furnish. There was then no organized industry and little promise of it.

Only in relatively recent years has a regular business of raising cattle for the market taken form in a few large fattening ranges in Guatemala. This new business, however, goes back of the immediate past, for it has been made possible for present and future by the rich tropical fodder grasses of Africa and Asia, which were first introduced into Central America at the beginning of the century. These fodder grasses are said to have the qualities of both grain and grass, for they seem grains in botanical origin, turned to grasses with long broad leaves (they grow, quite commonly, to five and

six feet tall) as a result of centuries of growth on the Asian, African and Australian plains.

Since these tropical grasses were introduced into Guatemala they have become a commonplace of the landscape, in immense olive-green pastures, alternating with maize fields and cane and forest as we look on them from a distance. But they are hardly commonplace when we find ourselves in the midst of grasses shoulder high to a steer, with blades two and three feet long, one or even two inches wide, and literally as tender as timothy.

When we go to Central America we are prepared for the banana plantations with their arching leaves and bunches of bananas hanging "upside-down" above our heads as we ride along the "banana walks." Most of us have heard something of the beauty of the coffee plantations in blossom, and of the magic gleam of the ripe red berries against shining green leaves. We know that sugar grows as a pale green sea, is cut by picturesque natives with two-foot swords, and is crushed in mills where the cane pulp is burned under the boilers for motive power, with all the romantic suggestion of a cycle of perpetual motion.

Even the hardened traveler, however, is not prepared for the broad new beauty of the cattle ranges. Nor does that beauty change as he sits his horse in the midst of a field of these strange, lush grasses, surrounded by cattle of every breed and size. He can ride through miles of these pastures, his shoes and leggins soaked through with the dew that they shower to his very knees, and as he rides, finding his sleek, fat horse insisting upon al-

ways having her mouth full of this juicy fodder in the same way that a small boy will work the happiest with a mouthful of chocolate. And as he looks up at the blue volcanoes and down at the flowing irrigation ditches, he may possibly be able to remember that steamships at Puerto Barrios are only three days away from New Orleans and five days from New York.

Something has already been done toward preparing the way for the use of these cattle ranges for the world's markets. The beeves feed to a remarkable fatness on the grasses, and move, on some of the plantations, directly from the fattening pastures into the abbatoirs, with all the freshness and weight of grain-fed animals. Such meat is now feeding portions of Guatemala, and the future seems to indicate that México may some day be supplied with chilled beef in refrigerator cars instead of by live cattle driven overland and necessarily fattened again near the Mexican cities where they are consumed. Nor does it seem fantastic, then, to wonder if some day Central American cattle may not be competing with South American beef, in the markets of Europe, even ultimately in the markets of the United States.

Thus begins the modern phase of the pageant. Part of its importance to Central America is the relatively small number of men needed for cattle raising. The next phases of agriculture, the raising of the grains, now requires many hands, because as yet the methods of work in Central America are necessarily still in the extremely "manual" stage. But its development predicates, frankly, the employment of machines.

We are inclined to look on the peculiar physical con-

ditions of Central America and to say at once that one can never use, in these tropical countries, the machinery that has made the prairies of North America and of Argentina and Australia the wheat-producing areas of the world. Nor indeed is that machinery adapted to Central America or to the tropics generally. But we limit both our inventive genius and our adaptability when we assert that these two are incapable of producing machinery to meet the problems of the tropics.

Certainly, special machinery has been designed and built to facilitate the banana trade. The time should come, equally, when its own machinery will be worth inventing and manufacturing to turn the highlands, and the lowlands, of Central America to the growing of wheat and maize, sugar and rice, and that, too, at the hands of the people of those countries. Only the pessimist who refuses to grasp the immense significance and advantage of the location and the natural wealth of soil and topography of these countries can really believe that this is impossible or even greatly distant.

It has not yet come, I freely admit. I have traveled hundreds of miles in the interior of Central America, and in one of the greatest of the countries I saw only three ploughs! But it is not without significance that of those three only one was the classic "crooked stick" drawn by oxen. One other was a modern disc plough, although still drawn by oxen, while the third was a deep-soil blade manipulated by a tractor! One would go far to find a more striking lesson in groping ambition and unconscious adaptation of the facilities of the new to the limitations of the old.

Those old limitations still remain the great force to be faced in Central America's invitation to, and her acceptance of, the opportunities of modern agriculture. The hold of Indian conservatism and tradition is only beginning to be loosened. Superstition holds the literal thousands in thrall. To this day, for instance, the farmers of the lower classes still plant and cultivate their crops, and always harvest, by the phases of the moon. No grower of cacao would consider himself safe if he had not pruned his trees in the dark of the moon and cut the pods in the waning thereof, for only thus can he be sure that the tree will not "bleed" to death!

Everywhere, fate remains the blind, inescapable force which no man (no Central American farmer, at any rate) can oppose. If such a farmer perchance taps a rubber tree until it dies he commiserates with his fellows over the *pesta* which pursues him. If by failure to renew his seed, his potatoes degenerate into buttons, he convinces himself that little potatoes are the natural product of his soil, and resigns himself to the calamity. Not only the low-caste farmers, but those above them, think in cycles of agricultural tradition which do much to continue the enslavement of these rich lands to ancient crops and wasteful methods.

President Estrada Cabrera of Guatemala once decided to take a hand in providing cheaper food for the masses of the people, and to this end encouraged them to denude the hills of the forests, to burn them and plant maize. In order to retain at home the product of these new fields, and so lower the price, the President issued a decree prohibiting the export of the grain. Could he

be blamed for the irrelevant fact that without an export market nobody planted a surplus, and that with only enough planted for each farmer's own household there was not enough maize to go around, and so the price soared even above the old figure which the President had sought to correct? Fate is cruel indeed—when you take liberties with economic law.

All this has only the significance of the stage at which Central American agriculture stands. That tradition and that superstition have behind them a long history. The field turned by the oxen drawing the disc plough was literally filled with broken pottery and gleaming with thousands of bits of obsidian knives. That field is the type of all, for like their fields, the lives and customs of the Indian farmers trace back into dim antiquity.

A magnificent civilization once covered the mountains and the jungles of Guatemala and spread over into Honduras and yet further south. It lived and prospered and advanced to high planes of culture and building construction. Yet nearly a thousand years ago this "old empire" of the Mayas virtually disappeared and although in later centuries the "new empire" came to follow in its pathway, in the end that great development passed, too, into some of the dimmest and yet most magnificent pages of human history. In their story is a moral which touches the points we are just looking upon, the limitations of old agriculture, the vital need and destiny of a newer, more practical development before these lands can come into their full power. The reason for the destruction of the Maya civilizations has been

sought by many students, but perhaps none is more satisfactory than what Dr. Sylvanus G. Morley, the American archæologist, calls "the high cost of living."

There is no reason to believe that the ancient Mayas followed any system of agriculture more advanced than that used by their descendants today. They undoubtedly raised their crops by burning the virgin forests, planting their corn, and then for the new crop burning the fields once more. This is a process followed and particularly approved today in the renewing of the great pasture lands. But when it is applied to crops other than grass it is inevitably ruinous, for each burning destroys the grains but leaves the sod intact. Thus, ultimately, comes that heavy sod which no seed can pierce, and the ground must be ploughed under or else given over permanently to the grasses.

Lacking ploughs or indeed any sharp instruments to turn this sod or even to cut it, the ancient Mayas were literally unable to make sufficient crops grow year after year on the same sites to allow their immense populations to survive. They burnt off forest land after forest land and migrated from one section of México and Central America to another, seeking virgin soil in which again to plant their crops. Finally, the very process of exhaustion must have brought on this supremely "high cost of living" in that there was literally not enough food to support the populations.

The unwritten tragedy of those old civilizations lies open before us today if we will ride across the thousands of acres of pampas grasses which surround the ruins of the seats of the "old empire" of the Mayas in México

and in Yucatán. Indeed, Dr. Morley's explanation is both significant and satisfying. From that old day down to the very present the Indians of Guatemala, and in fact all the farmers of Central America, have followed this same method of burning their fields. The jungle goes, its fertile soil gives a wonderful first crop after the burning of the felled logs, and then, as crop after crop is burned the grasses come in. Finally, they form the sod which chokes out the maize (planted in tiny holes with a stick) and finally sweeps away the farms and for years or centuries holds back even the jungle from reclaiming its own.

The story of Estrada Cabrera's plan for lowering the cost of maize by burning off the forests has been mentioned above. Today the naked hills around Guatemala City, burned in 1910 and grown now with grass and underbrush, no longer even suggest the fields of maize of the days of Estrada Cabrera, or the lordly forests of older time; they but bear mute witness to the long road which Central America must still travel to scientific farming.

In spite of these examples of the traditional attitude and of the limited viewpoint even of some of the leaders, the intelligence and initiative of the Central Americans, even of the lowest classes, must not be discounted. In many ways they are the most energetic and capable peoples of all the tropics; and in the tropics intelligence and energy are not common, and so produce manifold returns. Much is being done and will be done to wipe out the handicaps of climate, tradition and mechanical and scientific limitations.

In recent years, for example, an effort has spread through all Central America to eliminate the so-called filth diseases, and to make life the easier and the cleaner for the laborers. The International Health Board has had workers in every country, and has also been training up a corps of native sanitary officers to continue the work when the foreigners are withdrawn. There has been a growing interest, even though as yet but poorly supported, in increased agricultural education. Attention is also being given, in a tentative way, to providing opportunities for land ownership. It is just as necessary that the man who is given economic freedom be given the opportunity to enjoy that freedom as it is for the child who is educated to be furnished with the opportunities to use his education.

In any broad development of agriculture in Central America certain changes in population will probably be inevitable. Salvador will doubtless be called upon to contribute, as it has already done in slight degree, to the producing population of Honduras, and the Indians of Guatemala will be tempted to move down from the highlands into the lowlands where they can not only better their material condition but become contributors to the broader development of their country.

There must also be some form of encouragement of the immigration of European whites, probably from the south of Europe. Immigration is a subject which is discussed with much learned persiflage in every Latin American country, and there is a great deal of foolishness in the idea as it is usually put forth. But, as a matter of fact, Central America is probably as capable of

offering genuine inducements to the European colonists today as any section of Latin America. Colonists in those sections of Central America where irrigation can be combined with the conditions of a temperate climate, can undoubtedly establish themselves much more independently and more successfully than they can now do either in México or in most of tropical South America. Nor is it to be forgotten that the improvement going on in material and political conditions in the countries of Central America will be of perhaps more value to the individual landowner than even to large commercial groups, which are far more able to care for themselves than are any individuals.

CHAPTER X

HIGHWAYS TO PROGRESS

CIVILIZATION travels a literal, as well as a figurative, highway. Central America, girding itself for the march to its place in the modern world, has come, face-on, to the very literal problem of material highways, of roads and railways, the fundamental question of communications.

It is not without significance that this first problem must seemingly be solved before the great march can fully begin. There are wise men—and far from mere theorists they are—who assert that the building of railways between the countries will alone end wars and rivalries, and that the building of roads within the countries will alone end revolutions, will guarantee the realization of democratic ideals, as well as make possible their economic development.

Highways and railroads loom in the background of every search for the solution of every problem—they are the pressing material issue of Central American progress today. Boat service between the ports of Central America, and between those ports and the centres of the world outside, will be improved as traffic is developed to make improvements profitable—ships come and go the world around, as the demand calls them, for they

need no highways, not even the winds to bring them, in our day. But roads and railways—these must be built to bring the traffic to the ports, to make it worth the while for the ships to come and for men to create the wealth to bring to the ports and the ships.

The railway situation has been mentioned in connection with each of the countries described. As a summation, there are two phases, first, the present lines, and, second, the plans of the future. Today each country has railways, all of them three-foot narrow-gauge (excepting one short line in Honduras, a fruit road of standard four feet eight and one-half-inch gauge). The Costa Rica and Guatemala railways cross the Isthmus from the Caribbean to the Pacific. In Costa Rica this single line is virtually all the railway there is. In Guatemala there is also a line running northwestward along the Pacific plain to the Méxican border, where there remains only the gap to be filled by a permanent bridge across the Suchiate River to connect Guatemala by rail with the systems of México, the United States and Canada. Another Guatemalan line, first open in 1927, runs southeastward in the relatively high country to the border of Salvador. There it connects with the extension of the Salvador lines, completed in 1927, from Santa Ana. Salvador has the most modern and efficiently located railways of all Central America, crossing the length of the country, connecting all the chief cities and tapping all the great producing areas.

Nicaragua has only the railway between Corinto, the Pacific port, León, Managua and Granada, all on the Pacific shore, a line 170 miles long. The great dream

and plan of Nicaragua is a railway across to the Caribbean. Honduras has made tremendous efforts to build a transcontinental railway, and assumed a staggering paper debt, between 1867 and 1871, to achieve it. As yet it has only sixty miles of that railway, and five other lines in from the Caribbean coast, used almost exclusively for the banana trade. There are no Honduran railways on the Pacific side.

The future will doubtless see the building of the two transcontinental railways through Honduras and Nicaragua, as well as many lines opening up interior territory. The most encompassing and thrilling promise of railway development in Central America is, however, the building of the link of the "Pan-American Railway" from the northern border of Guatemala to the Panamá canal.

The laying of an unbroken line of steel rails from Washington to Buenos Aires is one of the old dreams of those who have interest and faith in the comity of Latin America and the United States. The idea had its birth, so far as public thought is concerned, in the suggestion made by James G. Blaine, then Secretary of State of the United States, before the First Pan-American Conference, held in Washington in 1889.

To-day Blaine's dream is almost the shibboleth of Pan-American hopes and ambitions. We may still smile, even as his hearers perhaps smiled in 1889, and yet somehow all of us feel that in the direction of that dream's realization lies perhaps the greatest hope of a real union of the countries of the Americas.

An international railway is more than a mere high-

way of traffic. In the immediate future, few of us will care to make the rail trip in one sitting from Dawson City in Alaska to Punta Arenas in Patagonia. But the joining of nation to nation, with lines which overlap, or come to meet, will wipe out a thousand jealousies and misunderstandings which exist today, will make neighbors where now there are enemies, and will join tiny principalities into great republican kingdoms.

On a smaller scale, in the great vision, is the picture of the service of the Central American section of such a railway toward solving the international problems of those countries. In this very hour, you will not find a man who will not tell you that a political Union of the five countries will be a surety only on the completion of that part of the Pan-American railway which lies between México and the Panamá canal. How great a dream, and how real an accomplishment will be the finishing of that first great link, from México to Panamá! Yet toward that end one man has worked, steadily, for over fifty years, an ambition comparable, if on a smaller scale, to the great ambition of Cecil Rhodes for the railway from the Cape to Cairo.

Here enters, then, the picturesque figure of Minor C. Keith, railway builder and banana king. Keith built the Costa Rica Northern for his uncle, Henry Meiggs of South America. He began it in 1871, when he was twenty-three years old. From it he found his way into the banana trade, and helped form the United Fruit Company in 1898. Gradually, since 1900, he has been returning to his greater work, railway building. His career in this has been deliberate and sure. First he

bought all the railways of Guatemala for his International Railways of Central America. Then he laid out, and built, the line to the Mexican border, there to be linked with the self-styled Pan-American Railway of México. This he finished in 1911—forging the first international railway link between México and the River Plate.

Then Keith turned to Salvador, and built the line the length of that country, every mile of it part of the necessary line of the Pan-American dream. This was finished in 1920, paid for alone from the earnings of the Guatemala line and a Salvador national subsidy of $7,000 to $12,000 a mile.

Keith's next plan, for the first international line within Central America, between Guatemala and Salvador, presented many difficulties, most of them probably based on national fears and jealousies on both sides. Not until 1923 did he get these troubles ironed out. In Guatemala, political complications which were apparently unsurmountable were then overcome, and construction begun. In Salvador the national financial difficulties delayed and threatened to stop him, so Keith underwrote a whole national loan for $19,500,000 U.S. Cy., on the credit of his railways. Then he drove on, to the completion of the Guatemala-Salvador line in 1927—his second international link and the first international railway ever built wholly within Central America.

The Salvador division of the International Railways of Central America, as completed in 1920, goes almost to the Honduran border. It may be many years before

an all-rail line will skirt the edge of Fonseca Bay through Honduras, but long before such a line is built, railway ferries will carry trains across Fonseca Bay to join the Nicaraguan lines, which can easily be extended to the edge of the bay, when the time comes for them to be linked in the Pan-American plan. The Keith group may not control the Nicaragua railways when this time comes, but whenever Nicaragua is linked up, the line from Granada to the Costa Rican border is a very short and easy one, with virtually no rivers to cross and no grades to negotiate. And then some day the Pan-American line will cross the fairly heavy country of Costa Rica—perhaps in the highlands to the east and north of Lake Nicaragua—and on to the edges of the Panamá canal. Such is the great railway plan, half-told, half-done, by Minor C. Keith, yet today crowded with possibilities and romantic with difficulties and struggles.

While railway building and railway planning have been going on, a less spectacular battle, if not a slower and harder one, is being fought. This is the battle for roads. Roads, mere highways, where ox-carts and automobiles can go, in the wet season and in the dry—these, too, are at the heart of Central America's transportation problem, for they are vital as feeders to any railway that is ever built. There are appallingly few roads there. Perhaps half a dozen great highways could be mentioned. But these have all of them been built as substitutes for railways (not feeders to the steam lines) or for the pleasure of the wealthy owners of automobiles. Practical highways into individual producing

sections of the countries have as yet hardly been even contemplated. Highway construction is still a plaything of government, a political slogan, or an ideal of the dreamers.

In Nicaragua, for instance, road building, while it has been undertaken seriously, is as yet largely a series of "projects." Leading out today from the city of Managua is a new highway forty feet wide. It is built of clay or soapstone or sand as the surrounding country provided, a road without a "crown" and almost without a ditch, built, the natives say, in order that the wealthy of the city may have a boulevard to ride on in the cool of the evening! One, or at most, two rainy seasons will probably destroy it utterly, as they have ruined the once passable roads to the coffee-producing district of Matagalpa. That latter highway, covered by automobiles in the dry season, becomes a morass of clay through which only sturdy mules can find their way, when the first rains settle its dust into mud holes.

The money appropriated for roads, equally in Nicaragua and in practically every country of Central America, is spent either for spectacular enterprises like this, or for elaborate surveys and "plans," with the vague idea of interesting foreign capital or in anticipation of a government windfall that never comes. There is no doubt as to the problems of tropical roadbuilding, and not the least is an apparently climatic effect in the native psychological inhibition against spending money for "upkeep." Repairs are never made until they are obviously needed, and that, on a tropical road in the rainy season, is too late. Concrete culverts, highly "crowned"

roads, and river fords made of concrete runners might, if generally adopted, go far toward solving the road problem. But sometimes, when you are riding mule-back in a pouring rain, listening to your mule's hoofs sucking into and out of the very holes all the mules before him splashed into, you are likely to find yourself agreeing with that stalwart band of old-timers who insist that the only practical tropical road is one of solid and eternal masonry.

Yet, actually, there are no difficulties facing road builders in Central America which were not duplicated in those few tropical countries where there are good roads, and the success of the work there indicates that success can follow a really whole-hearted devotion to the road problem in Central America. What one can see there today offers of course little encouragement to hope that even the great desire for roads will overcome the custom of generations. For nearly 400 years the typical road in every country of Central America has been the single-track ox-trail, cut from five to twenty feet deep through the loam, a source of blinding and choking dust in the dry season, and an impassable mud hole or even a flowing river in the rainy season.

In some sections of the interior these roads are cut so deep in the rich soil that it is impossible for a carter to see another coming in the opposite direction, and as two carts cannot pass the drivers blow ancient conch shells as they take their way into the deep cuts. If perchance they meet, there is no possible turning aside, and one or the other must take his way back.

In such an event the leading oxen are unhitched,

driven up the steep sides of the cut, and attached to the rear of the cart. They then pull both cart and wheel oxen backwards until passage is possible, a simple process, but painful, to say the least, to the wheel oxen. The ox-cart is, however, a vehicle which can travel where hardly a mule can find his way. Over boulders, breast high, down and up slopes impossible for an automobile, they will carry loads entirely unbelievable. But they do so at a cost of suffering to the animals and of money to the shipper quite inconceivable. As one foreigner put it:

"You have to leave the working of the ox-carts to the natives, for a 'gringo' can't stand even to look on, for the cruelty of it. Give a contract to a native and then go off and leave him alone. He will come through with anything, on an ox-cart. I have seen them carry machinery units of two tons each over what we would call 'impassable' roads. A five hundred horse-power electric plant was brought up from Bluefields to the mountains of Nicaragua by scow and canoe and ox-cart—but at a cost of $240 (U.S. Cy.) a ton!"

This is the toll of the absence of permanent roads. But as with almost everything else in the tropics, permanence is bought only at immense initial cost—you cannot build a bit of road this year, improve it next year and gradually create a highway which will tempt traffic which in the end will justify putting in rock, macadam or concrete. The permanent road has to be built at once and finally—every subterfuge is washed away in the wet season or blown away in the dry. However, even if the exchequer of the Central American countries were

rich enough to provide roads in this way—which they are not—there is another problem in the lack of road-building materials. There is little gravel, which was one of the rich gifts of the glacial period to the civilizations of the temperate zone. In fertile sections, rock for crushing is often scarce, and when it is found, is like as not to turn out to be only a single big boulder buried in the earth where it was thrown by a volcano. As the foreigner quoted above remarked, "It is the first place I ever saw where there wasn't too much rock." So the most esteemed material for road building in Central America is clay—because clay at least does not blow away in the dry season!

The story of Central American roads is not the merriest chapter in her copy-book, but it is worth the setting down, for roads are so inevitably the great means of communication throughout all the countries. Railroads there are and must be, but roads must feed the railways. Roads must bring produce over the hills to the valleys down which railways must be built, in this country of valleys. Roads must be the means of bringing distant sections to link with the arteries of the railways and the ship-lines. Oh, the pity and the opportunity of those twenty-mile highways which are still only hopeless dreams to the coffee-growers of Guatemala!

The absence of roads explains much of the long delays in the development of Central America. Their absence, too, emphasizes how deeply the world, as well as Central America, is concerned in a remedy for the lack. Indeed, the world could do far worse than actually to help build highways in Central America. From

a merely business viewpoint, no single policy could be more productive of good, both in material profit and friendship, than help to the construction of highways by any group, even by a foreign automobile association in selling motor lorries! Toll roads would probably be impracticable, but assistance to planters in building such roads as the coffee highways in Guatemala might be far from a bad investment—or advertisement.

In fact, I cannot omit general reference here to the suggestions, made many times by many persons, that not the least helpful work that might be performed by the United States government in Central America would be in road building. Of these suggestions perhaps the most tenable is that made by a thoughtful American resident of Central America itself. His plan would be the construction of a highway through the highlands for the length of Central America, starting at the Panamá canal. Such a road, he points out, would furnish the canal with invaluable interior lines of communication for defense and (with feeders) would be an almost inexhaustible source of supplies for the canal garrison and population in case of war. Thus as a strategic construction such a highway would apparently more than justify itself. And as messenger of good will and good faith on the part of the United States to Central America it would be of value untold, for it would say just what words can say so poorly, and deeds so well!

CHAPTER XI

TRADE AND FRIENDSHIPS

The history of commerce in Central America is no drab record of barter and boxes, nor are its problems new. It all goes back, like so many phases of the life of these colorful countries, to the golden days of the pirates themselves.

The English buccaneers were the first traders to Spanish America. Sacking and slaughter, so to speak, were actually matters of secondary importance to them. Primarily, the English ships on the Caribbean sailed in the name of trade, and while they captured a Spanish galleon or raided a Spanish colonial city by way of "eking out," at times, on the expenses of their voyages, most of them were bent on commerce.

To the eyes of the Spanish government, however, trade and piracy were equal crimes. The gallant sacking of a town or the capturing of an unwieldy galleon was an unwelcome attention, but it was no worse than the bringing of contraband from English looms and factories to sell in the Spanish colonies. Trade had always been a monopoly of Spain, and the Spaniards at home were inclined to regard the exploitation of their fellow-Spaniards who lived in the colonies as something quite as legitimate as the exploitation of the Indian serfs. Many of the great tragedies of the paralyzed material

development of the colonies were due directly to the rapacity of Spanish tradesmen and the uncalculating greed of the Spanish crown. In the name of profits for the home traders, the colonies were prohibited even from manufacturing anything that Spain could conceivably provide—and provide at prices ruinous alike to the colonial pocketbook and to the loyalty of the colonial purchaser.

Contraband from England, France and Holland came to be welcomed and the colonists to co-operate with the smugglers. Finally, Spain grasped the need of some control of this trade, and established the great annual fairs at the colonial ports. All Europeans excepting Spaniards were always forbidden to reside in the colonies, but the English, Dutch and French traders were, in later years, allowed to come to the fairs under royal Spanish patronage,—and taxation.

To these fairs, held at various ports, is to be traced the final break in the Spanish monopoly of the trade of Central America. The rise of the British flag as the predominant force of commerce in the Caribbean comes, also, to be marked by the fairs at Puerto Bello, the Atlantic end of the paved causeway that ran from Panamá, on the Pacific, for the transport of goods and treasure across the Isthmus. Here flocked the colonists to attend the fairs, and here the British and the French came with their trading ships, and here, indeed, came Henry Morgan in 1668 to sack and burn the port—doubtless in a poor year, for the fairs were not always rich in net returns and a sailor-man must make his voyages profitable.

But it was not merely the English pirates nor yet the opening of the colonial fairs to English and French traders that finally took the bulk of the trade away from the Spaniards. It was the very means which has for centuries been the great commercial asset of England—British bottoms. The Spaniards had not learned to be traders, for the lure of treasure-troves was too great to leave them any deep interest in anything so small as the profits of commerce alone. As the treasure ships became less and less frequent because the treasure became exhausted, Spain's control of the trade waned steadily and finally with astonishing rapidity. In 1686 the treasure fleet was twenty-seven galleons, aggregating 15,000 tons, and the armed fleet that accompanied it was made up of thirty ships of a total of 12,500 tons, in all 27,500 tons. In 1720, thirty-four years later, all the fleets that went to and from Cadiz to the Isthmus totaled only 6,000 tons burden.

The trade of Spain, which had at first been the total of all the goods that legally entered Spanish America, had become in the Eighteenth century but twenty per cent of it. The trade of England, which had begun with the limited contraband cargoes in the holds of the tiny boats of the English pirates, then comprised the overwhelming balance of the eighty per cent of non-Spanish trade that went to the great empire beyond the seas. Less than forty boats left Spain for America in the Eighteenth century, while 300 trading ships of other flags, chiefly English, sailed from Europe in the same period for the same shores.

The trading empire of Britain thus became one of the

most important factors in the life and later, for a time, in the history, of Central America. Great Britain was on the scene as a Central American power long before the United States appeared, and for years before a definite policy was evolved in Washington the British flag was better known and carried more prestige than any other standard which floated the Caribbean Sea.

With Jamaica, Trinidad, British Honduras and Guiana, Britain was well entrenched, and it was no mere gesture of diplomacy or war, but a feeling soundly rooted in British business, that made Great Britain offer its cooperation with the United States in the early stages of the discussions of what was to become the Monroe Doctrine.

Even after the decision of the United States to enunciate the Monroe Doctrine alone, there continued for fifty years a gradual encroachment of British political control in Central America itself. British Honduras early grew into a crown colony—from a lumber concession. The eastern coast of Nicaragua had reached the stage of an independent kingdom and was on the highroad to a place in the British empire when first the Clayton-Bulwer treaty of 1850 gave it pause and later local conditions and finally the Hay-Pauncefote treaty settled the matter forever by returning the territory to Nicaragua. The deposed ruler of the "Mosquito Kingdom" now resides, it is said, in half-Indian, half-Negro splendor, in Jamaica, awaiting the restoration that will never come.

Great Britain is no longer a conscious political factor in Central America, where once it was perhaps the

greatest. But it still stands, in trade and commerce, in an almost unique position as an arbiter of all that is best and soundest in commercial relationships and in the articles of manufacture which it still ships, in ample quantities, to the Central American market. The British have, however, been deliberately relinquishing, since the Great War, their larger financial interests in Central America. The burden of the foreign loans and the public service investments have been passed or seem about to pass into United States hands. This American predominance in finance is recent, however, for before the growing American interests came on the scene, another element entered and played out its part. This element was Germany.

In the wake of the trade winds that brought Spaniard and Briton to Caribbean, the busy steamers and the ubiquitous traveling salesmen of the modern German *Hansa* found their way to Central America, in the late '80's. They discovered excellent opportunities for both trade and investment, although the competition they encountered was still chiefly British. So late as 1910, Great Britain was still making new advances into the solid friendship and commerce of the Central Americans. With Germany, Britain waged active competition both in articles of trade and with the still more significant weapons of national and private banking. British capital was building the railway in Salvador and financing, with a generosity that is still the criterion of foreign cooperation there, the coffee planters of Guatemala and Costa Rica. But along with German cutlery and Ger-

man machinery, German finance came at this time to Central America.

German money began to be poured into the coffee trade and before the Great War hundreds of thousands of gold marks were either invested in coffee properties or loaned by German bankers to the native planters. This was Germany's great challenge to England for the control of Central American trade, and from it grew a competition in the granting of loans that went so far as not only to develop the coffee industry immeasurably but to give the coffee planters advances which were not needed for their industry but which, easily borrowed, were often as easily spent not only at home but abroad. Not a little of the later financial difficulties of the Costa Ricans and Guatemalans were those incident to these generous loans made in the enthusiasm of this British-German competition for the coffee trade.

Through this extravagant loan process the Germans, chiefly in Guatemala, came into control of many of the most valuable coffee properties in Central America. The same result did not follow the British loan inflation only because the British, although they had overloaned, were not so interested in acquiring the properties as were the Germans.

During the Great War, the sequestration of alien property and the later forced sale of German-held stocks and bonds in property other than land resulted, probably to the surprise of the Allies, in almost the entire sum of the German capital in Central America being perforce converted into land owned or operated by Ger-

man citizens; until today it is said that half the coffee production in Guatemala is in German hands.

All these factors combined with the German desire for colonial control to bring about a situation in which the Germans stand unique amongst all the foreigners of Central America. The German is known always as the one class of European (and this excludes also the citizens of the United States) who deliberately takes up a permanent residence, marries and becomes a part of the life of the Latin American country with which he has cast his lot. Other foreigners come and go, but the German comes and remains. As we look back on it today, we are likely to decide that this was due in large measure to the German policy of world politics which prevailed in the busy pre-war era. The German who went abroad was encouraged to stay, to marry (especially a wealthy native girl) and if necessary to take up citizenship in the country in which he lived; the German Empire allowed him to become a citizen of a foreign country, while at the same time he considered it his right to return to German citizenship whenever he might choose.

Thus, the German, like the Spaniard and the Englishman, carried on his conquest of Central America with the tools at his hand. He worked to make Central America German by putting Germans and German standards of living into the very heart of its life. In fact, those who criticise the German most freely say that when he marries a girl of good family he usually makes a much better match than he could make at home,—not a disgrace, at any rate! The better type of German

"colonist" was not unknown in Central America in the old days, however. Nor is he missing today, when many hundreds of young Germans are going, each year, to push still further the empire of German trade and "colonization" into this centre of Latin American interest.

We must recognize very frankly the success, in a measure, of the efforts put forth by Germany to achieve that empire before the war, even while we note, definitely, that it was the war, and nothing that happened in any part of Latin America, that nipped the German plans. Among the policies that brought on the European conflagration is to be remembered what Germany called its need for "a place in the sun." With Central America in our minds and thoughts, is it fantastic to wonder if one of the focal points of that "place in the sun" might not have been Central America? Latin America certainly was deeply considered in Berlin and as one realizes the potentialities of Central America in climate, soil and accessibility (not to mention strategic importance), it is not difficult to believe that this favored section of the western hemisphere was definitely in the eyes of the German Foreign Office.

Perhaps all this might be more than mere speculation today had the Great War turned out differently. But if the war settled anything at all, it surely removed the German menace to the United States' policy of opposition to European force or colonization in Latin America. If, also, the shifts and changes in world finance brought any of its problems home to the American public, it brought, certainly, the sense of responsibility for the financial needs of Latin America. In this, it clarified

the role that the United States have now come to play in the affairs of Central America.

The three types of interest in Central America that passed in the panorama of its earlier history were always impossible of adoption and in a way all were antagonistic to the United States. The empire of the Spaniards was never possible, for the people of the United States have an often expressed prejudice against conquest or even military control—certainly against anything bearing that label. The empire of trade of Great Britain must, I think, be also rejected for the present, for although the United States like trade, and seek it, there is, inherent in their diplomacy and finance, the principle of the "open door" and equality of trade opportunity that makes American traders face competition abroad without the active support of either government or banking at home. The German system of Latin American empire through colonization and close personal ties is also far away, for as yet the United States are themselves more interested in the problems of immigration than in emigration.

Thus, when the problems of Central America became concentrated on the American side of the Atlantic, the United States were forced by the pressure of both commercial needs and political exigencies to take a road entirely new. They took the way of financial co-operation.

This American financial co-operation has distinctive characteristics, somewhat new in international relations. It is based not on trade or the expectation of trade, but frankly on the recognition that in American business,

abroad as well as at home, commerce and banking are enterprises distinct from one another. Banks do not finance trade as such, nor do they support, for their own sake, such projects as power plants and factories; finance is separate, and the trade goes where there are the best markets; finance is separate, and the orders for the equipment of electric plants and factories go to the best and most economical producer, be he German, British, French or American. Outside the American tariff wall, American finance travels a narrow and lonely highway. The banker seems to feel, somehow, that his investment abroad is the better if, for instance, the machinery it buys is purchased where machinery is cheapest—wherever that may be.

This point is, I think, not commonly emphasized. It is important, however, for it bears both on the relations of Central America to American finance and of European traders and investors to Central American trade and investment, particularly public service investment. It means that American finance supports enterprises in Central America (and in Latin America in general for that matter) on the basis of their financial soundness, not on the basis of their possible profit to other American interests, such as exporters and public service groups. There is, of course, some direct finance of trade, and certain great contracting and public service finance organizations have done and do much important business in Central America, in competition with similar British and German organizations. But the genius of the American relationship to Central America is clean-cut; it is financial, and nothing else. The other things

may follow, but they stand, in their turn, on their own merits.

It is difficult to realize that the American banker and the American investor back of him have this utter lack of interest in advancing American trade, but such is, I think, the actual case. Trade, from the United States point of view, has always been a self-sufficient sort of gamin, well nourished at home on his home markets, and therefore able and willing to make his way if he ventures into the streets of the world. He has never been the protected daughter of the house, as trade has been to Great Britain. But finance, capital—there you do have the rather timid and carefully guarded daughter of the household of the United States of America!

In the advancement of American capital into the Central American field there has been an adaptation of certain ancient phases of the once closely linked trade and finance. The old concession system has been rediscovered and adapted for the use of American finance, in railways and banks, in agricultural enterprises (even including in its own special ways the banana companies). Of late, even the guarantees of government loans have come, more and more, to be made on the basis of what are virtually concessions for the collection, by authorized agencies, of the national customs and other taxes.

The modern concession, as developed in Central America, is now only a sort of commercial insurance. It is given by a government against the possibilities of the next government changing the form or basis of taxation, modifying the laws or varying the general policies

in any way to make difficult and unprofitable the operation of the enterprise. The concession, making irrevocable grants for a definite period, assures the concessionaire that he will enjoy, for the life of his concession, rights and privileges at least equal to those in the country from which he came.

The concession system is not a modern growth, nor is it confined to Central America or even to Latin America. It is a heritage from the chartered company of the days of Queen Anne, as a means of bridging the gulf between the needs of undeveloped countries and the facilities of the so-called more civilized lands.

The chartered company led, however, to the creation of a crown colony, where the company had come originally only for trade. Thus the great fear in Central America has always been that the outcome of the modern concession system at its baldest would likewise be a modern protectorate. Troubles of concessionaires and in general those of any great financial interests would, it was always suspected, bring on increased surveillance and even intervention on the part of foreign governments. And specifically on the part of the United States.

The role of Washington is, however, actually the reverse of intervention. The Department of State's policy toward finance and concessions has, especially in recent years, been designed to escape that danger by foresight, for no one has a better opportunity than Washington to realize that financial troubles and abuses are usually the surest road to misunderstandings, interventions and unwelcome protectorates. Washington has frankly sought to avoid, in advance, even the suggestion of intervention

by carefully reconciling in all large concessions, contracts and loans, the risks run and the local conditions in Central America with the tenets of American finance —as outlined above.

Loan after loan has failed because the Department of State would not use its great power to force either the bankers to offer better terms or the countries to accept what seemed onerous conditions. Washington has been frankly anxious that the financial relations of Americans to Central America be fair and just to both parties—just as Great Britain seems to see to it that British traders give as well as receive fair and just consideration abroad. This attitude of Washington is of as great importance to Europe as it is to the United States, for justice does not mean monopoly, any more than the modern concession needs now to mean an entering wedge to either military or financial domination. The "open door" is a fundamental policy for Central America, as well as for the Far East.

All this means much to the world. American trade does predominate in Central America; this is the gift of geography, of the closing of the European markets and factories during the Great War, perhaps, but far and away American trade is the greatest, in both export and import, in all the countries. American finance is moving toward Central America, and as the new type of American financial relationship appears there, the opportunities for Europe in Central America, and the open markets for Central America in Europe do not shrink, but widen. The world of trade and commerce is the richer everywhere, and Central America looks

toward its development with clearer eye and immensely greater hope than was once possible, directly because the policy of the United States does maintain the "open door" for trade for these five countries of Central America.

CHAPTER XII

LIFE UNDER THE RAINBOW

LIFE in the countries of Central America is colorful, as life should be, beneath the rainbow. So many of all the things man asks for in his saner moments are granted to him here. There are comfort of climate and beauty of scenery unexcelled. There are interesting people always, and romantic old houses with charming gardens and looking out on streets filled with ever-changing pictures. The world we know is far away, and there is time to enjoy a flower or a book, or to trade philosophies for as long as ever we will. And in every phase of it color—always color, never the drab sameness of the conventional lands.

Much has been written here of the beauties of Central America, but always that beauty returns to fill our eyes or color our memories. There is seldom the magnificence of the Rocky Mountains of the North, or the grandeur of the Andes of the South, for here the typical beauty is the serene, smooth cones of volcanoes, or the poetry of gray-green mountains of lesser mass, dusty-dim against the sky. Through every phase of her pictures, Central America is more the jewelled wristlet of queenly Nature than her resplendent diadem. So it is with the intimate completeness of her fertile jungle, and

so with the joys and the problems in the details of her towns and in the life her people live.

How, then, do they live? And how does their life conduce to the charm and philosophy of which I have spoken so many times in these pages? To begin with, there is, above the lower classes, a relatively deep stratum of men and women of intelligence, education and social grace. They correspond, very accurately, to the type of people who read this book, for the differences of their lives are chiefly those bequeathed them by the climate and the conditions, political and economic, of their countries.

Their homes are of a type decreed by the hot climate and in rather lesser degree by their inheritance of Spanish customs. The houses are usually one story in height, and are built of sun-dried brick, the most appropriate and universal heat-resisting material for houses in the warm countries of the world. In some sections, of course, stone is used, and where earthquake has made the people resourceful, wood construction, unadorned or covered with pressed sheet iron, has served for houses and even for churches and public buildings. Today, also, the more expensive reinforced concrete has begun to come into use for club buildings (first of all, interestingly enough), offices and official structures, and more recently for private houses. Whatever the material of the walls, however, the dwelling house in Central America is roofed with heavy native tile, either in flat roofs imbedded in a great weight of cement and mortar or with fine wide eaves projecting over the footway—this in the cities where earthquakes are not frequent. These

tiles, semi-cylindrical and set, cupped, one within another, are of a red clay which turns, with time and weather, to a lovely terra cotta brown over which green vines climb with grace and beauty and unending charm.

There is always such a garden within the walls of these fine houses. Entering through a wide door fit for coach or, now, for automobile, we pass directly to the open garden-*patio*, upon which open all the rooms. In Central America the chief rooms of the house open both on this *patio* and on the street, sometimes with long windows that serve as doors or are screened with high shutters which allow air to pass freely but close out visitors. But more than in other Spanish-American countries the houses of Central America open on the street, and in the cool of the late afternoon, one's friends pass and greet and enter, only a step or two from sidewalk pavement to drawing-room. On this street side are the *salas* or parlors and the "den" or, as it is called, the "office" which is, in fact, used as such by the master of the house, whose business is, by tradition, conducted from his home.

In these rooms the furniture is by preference of fine French manufacture, importations of recent or remote years—or native-made copies in tropical hardwoods. More characteristic, however, may be said to be the Austrian bentwood furniture which most Americans and English know as the approved form of chair to be let out for receptions. In Central America, however, there are not only the straight chairs of the familiar type, but settles or sofas as well and chief of all, the most comfortable "easy chairs" yet devised for the Tropics, with

the black bentwood rockers turned up into big wheels in front and becoming generous arms above the wide cane seats—comfort and coolness combined. These big "Austrian rockers" as they are called, fit out many a tropic drawing-room and in facing rows, four to six of them on a side, give the formal, and restful, welcome to many a fine old Central American home.

Bedrooms line, as a rule, the interior sides of the chief *patio,* with one or two pairs of glass doors, but no windows to the outside. The furnishing is distinguished from that of other lands only by the inevitable mosquito bars and the lack of sufficient electric lights. Throughout Central America the charge of electricity is calculated at so much per bulb per month. The rate is, actually, $1 or $1.50 U.S. Cy. per light, per month, a ruinous rate which encourages complicated wiring systems which, for instance, arrange matters so that you can have a light by your bed, or one over your dresser, but not both alight in the vast bedroom at the same time!

Along the sides of the *patio,* with its tropical plants growing the year around (and some of them always in bloom) are tile-paved corridors, under strongly supported eaves which project from the main roof and form a covered portico ten to fifteen feet wide. Here are tables and more Austrian bentwood chairs, and here, excepting when the rain is from the wrong direction, the family and visitors sit, talking, and enjoying some one of the many delicious frozen or liquid *refrescos* made of native fruits or spices, as cool and serene as one may be anywhere.

In large houses, the rooms are multiplied by increas-

ing the number of *patios*. But reaching across the back of the last of these "main *patios*" is, properly, the dining-room, opening with windows only on the open courts, and entered from the longitudinal corridor. Here the furniture is almost invariably French, the silver and linens and china also all imported, while the service of food is of native dishes which to the Anglo-Saxon are the most savory and delicious of all the national dishes of Latin America.

In other American countries, the upper classes and the foreigners invariably seem to prefer French cooking, and the typical native dishes are hardly to be found prepared with a view to digestions less hardy than those of the well-inured peasants. In Central America, however, a blend has been achieved which with native traditions and native cooks produces food without the overload of grease (and peppers to neutralize the grease) of México, for instance, and yet far away from the insipid imitations of French and English cooking which pass for the best cuisine in many other Latin American countries.

The typical meal begins with soup, richly made and well seasoned, and usually, but not necessarily, followed by eggs and rice, next by entrées with native sauces more suggestive of Spain than of France, and then by roasts scaled to make as tender as may be the too fresh native meats (beef is killed at 4 A.M. and eaten the same day, for there is no refrigeration excepting in the home ice-box). The roast is preceded by separate courses of vegetables (chiefly an infinite variety of picturesque little squashes done in many fashions). It is followed by

salad, sometimes, but far from always, and then by beans, for black beans are as popular if not so ubiquitous as in México. In Central America they are oftenest served in a purée, and if we are fortunate we shall meet early with the custom of pouring thick, slightly soured cream (like crème d'Isigny) over this bean purée—a dish fit for a banquet. Native cheeses are sometimes served, grated, with the beans. These cheeses are peculiar to different localities, for in Central America the connoisseurs of cheeses will find many new and delicious varieties.

Sweets are, as usual in Latin America, the least important division of the meal but—and I speak here still of the upper classes—there are many fine desserts for all that, typical of Central America or adapted from Spain or France. I remember one delicious dish made of the whites of eggs beaten up with honey until the result was so stiff as to be virtually solid—and filled with blanched almonds. You will find the same dish in Spain, where it becomes a hard candy called *turrón,* served with the cheese, but the bees of the coffee country produce a honey from the nectar of the coffee blossoms which adds a mysterious tang to this dish when you meet it in Central America.

And as for the coffee itself—as a rule you will get both the worst and the best coffee in the world in Central America. Even the best restaurants seem to use the sweepings of the coffee mills, the grades and the broken beans that cannot be sold abroad. But the richer coffees of Costa Rica, Salvador and Guatemala (most notable of all, the coffee of Antigua, Guatemala) are still served

in Central America, in the homes of the growers of these fine products. These coffees, browned by an expert and brewed in the home of your host make a beverage worthy of the wonder and delight of the most exacting gourmet.

All this food is prepared by native women cooks (I suspect that the fingers of one hand would suffice to count all the foreign cooks in Central America) in elaborate kitchens which surround the servants' *patio* behind the dining-rooms. In the centre of this *patio*, and almost completely filling it, is a rambling old red cement fountain open to the sky and filled with water continuously running in a small stream through all its half dozen basins. Here are washed the clothes, the dishes and the pots and from the flowing waters is also taken the drinking water (for the filter if local conditions demand it); from its basins the house *mozo* pumps, for hours on end each day, the water which fills the tank on the roof and thence feeds the shower bath which is the one indispensable household furnishing in the tropics. In the old houses, this cold shower, set up crudely in a cement-paved room, is the only bath available, although of course imported porcelain tubs and hot water systems are becoming more and more common.

The shower bath-room is next the last bedroom and usually in one corner of the servants' *patio*. Next is the roomy kitchen fitted with both a big German cook-stove and charcoal braziers. The former is most used, for wood is cheap and charcoal, while the better fuel of the two for cooking, is relatively expensive and is used, usually, only for heating flat-irons. Pans and even cop-

per pots line the walls above the stoves and the big native-made tables, but the pottery of the country, red-clay glazed on the inside only, is the approved cooking utensil for rich and poor alike. It is fragile, but it is easily cleaned, and its life is short enough to eliminate the problems which would otherwise be incident to its none too perfect glaze.

The meals from these kitchens are prepared by a large staff, for servants are cheap and the work of the house capable of an infinite division. In fact, the large establishment presided over by the Central American housewife gives her opportunity for a generous exercise of all the qualities of executive management which she possesses to so marked a degree, and makes the handling of a house full of servants as important a part of the family duties as the husband's contribution to its income.

The social life of the cities of Central America centres distinctly about the home—and the club. The social instinct in these descendants of Spanish colonists is highly developed and not only do the women make their homes the centers of social life, and long visits with the relatives and close women friends features of their days, but evening affairs with the men of their families are frequent. "Everyone" plays cards and in Salvador, at least, bridge is an art highly developed and played with skill and for stakes worthy of the bridge clubs in St. James's. In all the capitals there are fine men's clubs open as a rule once or twice a week to the women of the families of the members.

Dancing is of course the rule, and to the music of the

Guatemalan *marimba*, perhaps the finest dance music in the world. The *marimba* is an instrument formed of keys of wood, with long sounding-boards extending down below. It is, when set up, about twenty feet long, in two sections, and is played, standing, by four to eight men, with little hammers, like a xylophone. The speed which can be attained and the actually tinkling music which comes, even from the deep base registers of old mahogany, has a quality better adapted to modern (and old) dances than almost any known combination of instruments. The *marimba* is common in both Guatemala and Salvador, and often wandering *marimba* bands visit the other countries.

In Salvador and Guatemala the *marimba* has another use—for serenades. The properly devoted swain must serenade his beloved at least once a season, and this with a hired *marimba* band. In view of the fact that a *marimba* can be compared in size and bulk to a grand piano and in sound volume to a ten-piece orchestra, such a serenade is no minor matter. In fact, in San Salvador the serenade, although held, by custom, after the clubs close at 12:30, is the occasion for an improvised dance at the home of the honored lady—a custom in direct contrast to that in other Spanish countries, where the recipient of the honor of the serenade is never to be caught even peeping through the blinds of her house during the performance.

Serenades are, in fact, one of the fixed social customs of Central America, and are used not only by love-sick swains to honor their beloved, but by friends and ad-

mirers to honor public men. Military bands are sent by Presidents and Governors to serenade officials on their birthdays, and as the concert usually begins after midnight and is ushered in by a roll of drums, most of the town takes an often unwilling part in the homage to the recipient.

Music is of course a source of much of the entertainment of these countries. The native bands are of varying quality, and some of them are very fine, for there is much native ability and if well directed (as it often is by native as well as by imported French and Italian conductors) excellent local bands and orchestras are formed.

As for the theatre, not so much can be said. There seems to be no effort in any of the countries to have local stock companies, due doubtless to unhappy financial experience in the past. There are, from time to time, travelling repertory companies in the drama or opera from Spain, Cuba or México, but these almost invariably have to be subsidized by the government. Jacinto Benavente, the great Spanish dramatist, brought his own company through Central America a few years ago and gave lectures on art and politics in person in the afternoons and had his company perform some of his many notable plays in the evenings. The theatres were crowded for the fortnight's engagement in each of the capitals visited, but in addition to the door receipts, Benavente was paid a government subsidy of an average of $5,000 U.S. Cy. in each country. These governments cannot afford to do this often, and the result is that

the usual form of dramatic representation is the traveling hypnotist, the strong man, the singer of uncertain age—with a motion picture to "round out" the evening.

The typical theatrical performance in all Central America begins about 9 P.M. (after the band concert in the park if it is concert night) and consists of one ancient and dilapidated European motion picture drama, literally not less than five and usually nearer ten years old—and the special traveling performer. The picture is shown reel by reel, half of it before and half after the great performance. Each reel is run off separately, after which the theatre is lighted and every one goes about visiting for ten minutes. Then there is dark again and the second reel is shown, for its usual fifteen minutes. Again lights, visits and the third reel. Next, after an intermission, the traveling hypnotist or the faded singer. After this performance (given in two parts with a restful intermission between) the fourth reel, of the same picture, remember, is shown, followed by its pause and visits—and so on till the close, well after midnight. And this is literally the only form of recreation outside the social life of the community and the family.

It all tends to throw the Central American more and more back on his own resources. And, in fact, Central America is no place for a man or woman without something besides a gregarious instinct and a desire to be amused! It is perhaps for these reasons that the people there have developed just the type of direct thinker which is characteristic,—the others have died of ennui, or departed! For the Central American decidedly

The Indian Band at La Merced Church, Antigua, Guatemala.

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You buy the *iguana*, or edible lizard, "by the piece" and he is delivered by the tail.

thinks, and thinks well, up to the very highest point that his opportunities for culture allow him.

With him, conversation is an art, and with him, also, politics is a keen game of wits, developed the higher there because of the lack of other intellectual and nervous outlet. In years and generations past, men have gone into politics (even when it led to revolution) as much as anything because it was the one field where excitement could be raised when everything else was deadly dull. It is for this very social and psychological reason that one can be sure that with the widening contacts of Central America with the world and the growing importance of commerce and production, revolutions and old-fashioned Central American politics can be counted on to become things of the past.

For women, the compensating opportunity is not politics, however. Conversation is a part, without a doubt, for we find most accomplished hostesses in the drawing-rooms of Central America. The household, and the children, fill many days and years of the life of the Central American woman, and of course for her as for her man, there is often travel, both to Europe and to the United States (although seldom to the other countries of Central or to South America). Educational conventions may be said to have limited the life of Central American women, for the traditions, and the aim of the convent system of education (which alone is approved for girls of the upper classes) has emphasized the home, children and religion. In fact, they are most wonderful and understanding wives and mothers.

Concomitant with this, religion occupies an over-

whelming place in the lives of women in these countries —even in the countries where the men (except when they marry and some of them when they are dying) have broken away from the Church. It is not without significance that we hear, everywhere, the same reply to our question of the progress of women's rights in Central America. Always those in power say that "the women can never be given the ballot because that means putting their solid vote in the hands of the Catholic priests." This feeling is general, although in Salvador and to a less extent in the other countries, there has been some effort to organize the women and to move to secure them broader legal rights and in connection with this, even the vote.

All this in the upper rank of the society of these five countries, for, as everywhere, generalizations are safest in the upper quarter of a nation's population. But almost equally the people of the lower ranges have their similarities to one another. All through the countries the common people live in the same sort of houses, rough adobe in the towns, wattle-walled huts in the country, and over both thatched roofs made of grasses stoutly tied to rough frames. In the sections where the rains are heavier the roofs rise to a sharper peak, and where the Indians are less skilled in the art of thatching, an upturned, fire-scorched old pot peaks the tip of the thatch, but with these minor differences the huts of the laborers of Central America are much alike.

In all these huts the food is cooked over wood fires in the middle of the well-packed dirt floor, and the cross-beams and the straw in the peak are a gleaming black

from the smoke and greasy vapor. This is the ceiling, much approved for its supposed waterproof qualities. Along the cross-rafters hangs the dried beef of which the family is the proud possessor, and along with it the seed maize for the next planting, kept free from bugs by the smoke of the fire. In one corner of the hut is built the corn-crib, where the food for the whole year is piled like cordwood, still on the cobs, inside a wall of cornstalks. Along the other walls, only partially concealed from one another, are the family beds of the five to eight people who live in this 20 x 15-foot house. These beds are benches of wood, with flexible saplings for "springs," and upon them are spread the loosely woven palm mats which complete the equipment (with the family blanket added during the cold nights of the rainy season).

The cooking utensils are like those of the kitchens of the wealthy, only here there are only three or four pieces, counting the pot for the beans, the flat 18-inch plate where the *tortillas* of maize are cooked and the *metate* or grinding block of rough volcanic stone over which the woman works all day to make her flour from the maize she has soaked in a lye made of the wood ashes from her own fire, to soften and swell the grains. If there is baking done (as is usual excepting in certain Indian sections) there is, attached to nearly every hut, a big mud oven, either in a sort of portico of the hut or a little away from it under a thatch of its own. Here fires are built inside the two-foot dome of mud and rock and when the flames have heated the mud through, the fire is drawn out and the cakes put in to bake. "Cakes"

is the proper word, for the wheat-eating of the majority of Central Americans of the laboring classes is confined to a sweetened cake which they take with their coffee or chocolate in the morning—the maize *tortillas* furnish the bread of other meals.

In his dress, the Central American of the upper classes differs not at all from his fellows in other tropical countries and little from residents of the temperate zone in Europe and the United States. In the cities he likes to wear dark clothes, but usually surrenders to the comfort of white duck (and in the long periods of mourning to that most lugubrious of all garments, black cotton duck). He wears a soft felt hat, preferably black, if the weather conceivably permits it, and when he accepts straw, it is the hard straw of other lands, seldom the so-called "panama."

The women are more distinctive, but in most of the capitals the hats and gowns and wraps are of European style. In the smaller cities, the women go without hats, and wear, even in the upper classes, fine native or Spanish shawls of lace or silk, often of light colors, and always long dresses, still of starched linen or muslin, in the more conservative centres.

The lower classes have their fine national distinctions. The hot country garb is of course everywhere once-white cotton, and native straw hats of subtly differing patterns in the different countries, tiny round crowns with sharply upturned narrow brims high on the head in Salvador, peaked, but small hats, with a straw rosette on the side, in Honduras, larger hats, approximating the Mexican, in Guatemala, and sometimes "weighted

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Native woollen goods and blankets are woven in the highlands and sold in the city markets by the weavers themselves.

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The Indian women still weave by hand the gorgeously colored scarves, skirts and belts the designs of which distinguish tribes and villages.

down," so they will not blow off, with twisted scarves of red cotton around the crown. In all the countries the proper shirt for a man is cut off sharply at the waist and worn outside the trousers and the colored cotton sash which serves as belt.

The foot-covering, usually absent, is sometimes sandals,—often topped, above the bare foot, with tall leggins for riding (for the foot goes inside a protected stirrup). The women are dressed, as a rule, in the same ground-sweeping calico skirts of women of their class in México, the scarf of cotton carrying the baby or covering the head and face as they hurry, with mincing steps, along the streets. Only the Indian women of Guatemala, with their blue or red wrapped skirts, their brilliant *huipiles* or waists, and their innumerable strings of bright glass beads, give a touch of color to the drab life of the women of the lower classes. And they, too, have men dressed in braver garb and tribal uniforms, almost, of wool and cotton.

All these differences and charming variations are seen with ever dimming eyes as one travels through Central America. The life these very people live seems so simple and so natural that the traveler finds himself slipping, too, into the easy comfort of its charm. It is so natural and simple to be sitting in the plaza of old Granada, its tall yellow-flowering trees bathed in its fair sunlight. It is so easy and pleasant to be breathing the rare air of the Guatemalan uplands. Atmosphere and customs and comfort insinuate themselves into the soul, so that we are happiest, at last, when we take it all for granted as simply as the natives do.

CHAPTER XIII

THE HUMAN BACKGROUND

CENTRAL AMERICA passes in parade before the vivid background of its simple humanity. Race and custom and psychology throw into clear relief the history and the politics and the economics of these interesting countries.

The very race question, woven into the fabric of Central American life, is like the warp of this illuminated curtain. The white aristocracies of all the countries have unconsciously but inevitably spun the national thoughts and tendencies into one skein. The race factors of the basic populations, with all their degrees of combination or purity, form a most significant and varied scale. From the pure Spanish peasantry of Costa Rica to the pure Indians of the Guatemalan highlands, the scale runs in complete gradations. In the welter of mixtures, even, the gamut passes easily from the purity of Costa Rican Spanish peasant or Guatemalan Indian to the Caribs and Mosquitoes of the Caribbean coast, mixtures of Indian and Negro and often of the white of every strain of Europe.

The scale starts with Costa Rica, where those unmixed descendants of Spanish peasants have lived for four

hundred years under the tropical sun, unconsciously upsetting all theories of the deterioration of Europeans under that potent solar influence. Next, in Nicaragua, these white peasants give place to a remarkably blended mixed race, charming and at the same time of keen intellect—I remember one of the able literary men of Guatemala saying that we might talk all we would of the capabilities of other Spanish Americans, "but those big-headed Nicaraguans have the real brains," he said. Honduras has a well-attuned mixture of white and Indian, with the Indian beginning to emerge as a separate group. Salvador, with its astonishingly energetic mixed bloods gives, however, a closer link to the Indian qualities of Guatemala. In Salvador, we find the first important Indian tribal villages, small in population and actively engaged in independent agriculture. Guatemala has the great Indian population of the Isthmus, and its problems, as we saw and felt them, are chiefly Indian problems. Still, in Guatemala, we find, as everywhere, the substantial white and mixed-blood leaders, and an aristocracy quite as pure and if anything rather more proud than that of the lands where the Indian is a much less important element.

Into both the white population and the mixed-blood groups of all the countries have been poured some of the most interesting strains of Spain. These came in the colonial days to begin with, men and women adventuring with motives long forgotten, yet all, at base, because Central America was not a scene of mere conquest, nor yet of mere mining or trade exploitation. The Central America of colonial days, as an administrative

centre, a transhipping point for the treasures of Perú and Manila, was a land where gentlemen might live in comfort and, withal, "in style." In all the countries there was the delightful strain of the Andalucian, intelligent, by tradition unreliable, unbelievably hospitable, and philosophical in the face of tribulation and of triumph. Other strains of Spain came, too, to give basic individualities to the peoples of the various countries; the Gallegos, who furnished the peaceful farmers and peasantry of Costa Rica, the Estremadurians who brought belligerent self-assertion and keen business sense to Salvador, and the Castilians who in Guatemala brought and left that charm and dignity which captivate the merest tourist. To Nicaragua, too, the Castilians brought that fine intellectual interest which combines with the Andalucian hospitality to make the Nicaraguans perhaps the most understanding of all the peoples of Central America. In Honduras Spanish strains similar to those of Salvador have in the midst of her mountains evolved that idealism and vivid enthusiasm which make Honduras herself so typical of Central American politics and culture.

The Indian blood has contributed, amongst much else, one very definite quality, a serene, calm growth from the soil. That Indian is not the least important contribution to the quality of the outstanding mixed blood of Central America. In Central America the *mestizo* (literally "mixed") is by nature of gentle manners and instinctive friendship, and with training he emerges as a man of ability and precision almost in infallible ratio to his education and opportunity. The cultured Central

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All the world goes to market in Central America, the babies with the rest, pic-a-back or in stout slings of many-colored scarves.

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Three generations of Indians, the tiniest learning to carry a water jar as other little girls in other lands play with dolls.

American of mixed blood meets the European and North American on a footing of equality usually thoroughly free from the self-conscious resentment of many other peoples of similar racial strain. This distinction is more noticeable here than perhaps anywhere else, excepting, say, in Chile and generally in the temperate zone of South America.

This is one of the things that is basically important to the foreigner's understanding of Central America. We are all inclined to class Central America with her neighbor, México, losing sight of the fact that the Mexicans of today are made up, both in their strains from Europe and in their warlike and cunning Indians, of types very different from the Spaniards who went to Central America and the great Maya race which they found there.

This also has a broader general importance than appears on the surface. The Indian blood of the Central American *mestizo* is very different from that which the Spaniards met in México. I, for one, have never seen any reason, in logic or in modern experience, for the commonly sentimental custom of discounting the stories told by all the members of Cortez's expeditions of the treachery and cruelty of the Aztecs of México. Nor is there any doubt, on the other hand, that the Mayas, who furnish the Indian strain of most of Central America (and of the Yucatecan Mexicans, by the way) were a people gentler in culture and character than the Aztecs. Certainly, the Mayas were the builders of a great civilization (which the Aztecs copied as the Romans copied the Greek) and while they were stout warriors,

the Spanish records have little to say of anything like treachery.

But enough of history—just enough, I hope, to set a train of thought in a groove which will do more to clarify our understanding of the Central Americans than perhaps any other single idea.

The Negro strain does not seriously complicate the racial problem in these countries. Negroes are not yet as important either racially or economically in Central America as they are in other parts of the Caribbean. In old Spanish times there were Negro slaves in certain sections of Central America, just as elsewhere in America, but today their absorption has been chiefly into the so-called Carib and Mosquito Indians and "*zambos*" (the cross of Indian and Negro) of the Caribbean coast. The Negro strain, when it appears in the other parts of the countries, is, in fact, a subject of remark and interest. Until the railways and the banana companies imported Negro laborers from the West Indies, a Negro was as great a curiosity in the cities of most of Central America as a North American Indian is in London. Today the Negro belt, along with the banana belt, has been extended well into the interior, and the Negro is a familiar, although not a common, sight throughout Costa Rica and Guatemala. In Honduras he is still a rarity despite the banana plantations of the north coast, and the three or four fine Negro boys who attend the Normal School in the capital at Tegucigalpa are the source of intense pride, curiosity and delight to their fellow-students.

Quite as obvious, in the human background, as any racial classifications are those inevitable social divisions

which belong to a society in the general state of development of Central America. The rulers might even be called a permanently resident European caste. The turns of republican politics have of course brought forward soldiers and politicians of every type and strain, but back of these the power of Central American rule has rested actually if not openly with the aristocrat. His form of rule persists, no matter who holds the sceptre, and he is brought forward from time to time to solve the political and administrative problems which dictators may find too much for them. His form and method of thought also direct the form and method of thought of his country, so that although he may not control the press or the government or the congress, still he is consulted in the end by all. And in the end it is his ideas which carry the day, if the better way rules, just as opposition to his thought is usually the road to ruin and disaster.

Not that he will admit these things—Heaven forbid! The Central American aristocrat is quite convinced that he is powerless in the hands of demagogues, but one needs only look on Latin American lands where obviously the aristocrat does not dominate to note the difference. Central America remains aristocratic—and reactionary. She is likely long to be so, for no matter whether her aristocrat is called "Conservative" or "Clerical" or "Liberal" or even "Radical," he thinks and believes in the same way, and that way must frankly be accepted as the way of thinking of virtually all substantial men in present-day Central America.

Below the aristocracy come the politicians and the

false aristocracy which is of course the beginning of the real, intellectual aristocracy of the future. Politics is the approved Central American method of climbing the social ladder. These very politicians, military chieftains and business men in office, bring forth many excellent citizens and administrators, but the unthinking mass is naturally, and so inevitably, permanently below the upper crust.

The workers of Central America are, everywhere, mixed-bloods and Indians, with very little social distinction to the eye of the outsider. Yet actually the lines are fully as sharply drawn in the lower ranks as higher up, and there is a pride of caste in every grade which is significant of a self-respect which bodes well for the future. The artisan, who would never be seen wearing a coat because he is a "*camisa* man" (that is, literally, one who wears a shirt) looks down upon his cousin or brother who, having secured a government job or a clerkship on the railway, dresses himself in ready-made American clothes, and stifles with a duck (or woolen) coat in the tropical heat. The peon, with his short shirt worn outside his trousers, is under normal conditions equally proud of his caste and equally determined to maintain it. The Indians of Guatemala prove at every turn their pride of race, and indeed their pride of town and tribe. Their costumes are not only distinctive but definite labels of their origin and in some cases of their vocation as well.

Through all of these gradations of society, however, there is a recognition and support of the social organ-

ism of which they are a part. High and low are very close in these countries, and they understand one another in ways no foreigner can appreciate except he spend months with the aristocrat on his hacienda and as many more months with the workman in his grass-thatched hut. This closeness of relationship is what I have called the "kin" organization, which makes the "best families" occupy positions almost analogous to tribal chieftains.

Years of misunderstanding and revolution have hardly touched the loyalty and support to the *patrón* which is equally evident in self-sufficient Salvador and in the Indian sections of Guatemala. In Salvador the *hacendado* leads his retainers to the polling-booth and sends or restrains them from partaking in revolutions. In Guatemala the white man who penetrates an Indian village and stops to exchange a smile and a word with an Indian mother will find the tiny daughters of the household running up to him to have him stretch out his hand and touch their heads with the "*patrón's* blessing," a custom and a picture significant and charming.

Yet paternalism has its own drawbacks and its own elements of destruction. The *patrónes* who are called upon to bless the little daughters are, like as not, to be thinking grimly of their often nervous responsibilities toward the fathers. As one administrator of a great estate expressed it, one must needs handle the labor of Central America "*con cariño pero sin flojarse*" (with affection but without leniency). "And," added an equally experienced American, "with much patience."

But perhaps the whole matter was more succinctly summed up by the young Guatemalan aristocrat who said:

"Life is one long service to your *mozos*. You have to nurse them, marry them, get them out of jail, and if you aren't good to them you haven't any hands to pick your coffee, while if you hit one you get killed."

His added information that "*mozos* are like grippe—each case is different," adds nothing to the beauty of the epigrammatic summation, but it gives another glimpse of the personalness of the whole of life in Central America. And it gives a new realization of the permanence as well as the color of that curtain of human values before which Central America plays out her story.

CHAPTER XIV

THE PATH TO EDUCATION

In the midst of all the problems of Central America, political, social or economic, we all find ourselves in the end considering but one possible solution,—education. Whether it is agriculture, with a crying need for more scientific methods, or whether it is politics, with the only hope a thinking electorate, the answer seems the same,—education. Central Americans of every class, almost, say it, just as every visitor dismisses the human questions which crowd upon him with a sweeping declaration that "the governments ought to educate them."

So no book on Central America can avoid a word on this matter of education; it is the goal and the road to the goal in one. The situation is inexpressibly complicated and yet it has certain factors of simplicity.

To begin with, while education is recognized as the greatest need and desire of every Central American country, it has been for many years and even for generations almost the stepchild of all the Central American governments. Revolutions have wasted the substance, overloaded administration has eaten up revenues, and graft has fattened favorites—and education has paid the bill. There is not one country in Central America where there are enough primary schools to care for the

children who should go to them, or where the teachers are paid what can be called a living wage. In one or two of the countries of Central America the school teachers have not been paid even their legal salaries for many years. Yet there is not a government in Central America today which does not believe in education and which does not look forward to the time when it will be "able" to devote its energies to the schooling of its people. This desire is absolutely sincere, but always there is the trouble that there are not enough teachers nor enough school buildings nor enough money. We come early to feel that the problem is no longer that of awakening the Central American governments to the value of education. It is finding for them first the way to teach their people, and next the money with which to create the systems that can educate them.

There are, in every land, two, often opposing, goals in education. One is the creation of a high intellectual type, the other a broad general culture. To the creation of the intellectual types Central America even now contributes with remarkable completeness. There are no more cultured gentlemen in the world than those one meets in Central American capitals. All of the countries have contributed men of power to the lists of Latin American artists, doctors and jurists, and at least one author of the first rank was born and died in Central America—Rubén Darío of Nicaragua. The arts of music, painting and literature are patronized by all of the governments, and except in times of financial stress, a few students in all of these are sent abroad for study at government expense. The lawyers and the doctors of

the Central American capitals are keen and able and those in other walks of life who have had the opportunity have demonstrated unquestionably that sound education vastly develops the native capacities.

But education in the larger sense means also the development of the masses. To this end there has always been in Central America the education of the Roman Catholic Church, with its definitely religious background. But today religious education flourishes broadly in but one of the countries, that is, Nicaragua. Here, with its imposing Jesuit "College of Central America," its many schools and convents, the Roman Catholic Church has been handling, with State financial aid, many of the problems of education for the government.

Church education, upon which the lay teaching of Central America is still largely based, has always had very rigid standards. In some of the religious schools (like that of the Silesian Brothers in Granada, Nicaragua), there is manual training, and always there has been some education in agriculture under the Jesuits. Genuine trade education has, however, never been adopted generally in church schools in Central America. At the present time in the lay schools of certain of the countries attention is given to conventional "manual training" instruction, but Central Americans seem to feel that education, even in native trades, is not necessarily the sole proper training for the working classes of backward countries. As one student of his peoples' welfare remarked very fittingly:

"It is well to teach the workers how to handle their tools, but if they are not taught arithmetic as well they

will not advance socially, for they will not be able to succeed financially at the trades that you have given them."

There are still many open questions as to where, and how, education should lead in Central America. It is true that old-fashioned education has never been given its fair chance there, but that same "old-fashioned" education has never, at its best, even pretended that it applied to Latin America. It has always seemed to me that the foundation of education in tropical Latin America calls, more than elsewhere, for a survey first of all of the physical and mental development of the children, and that only upon such a survey should the permanent curricula be based. Only after that could we fairly test "modern" education. Elsewhere[1] I have suggested that the simple but absolutely non-existent basic knowledge needed as a starting point for the determination of methods of tropical and mixed-blood American education are, first, the actual average age and history of adolescence there and, second, the intellectual ages, by modern psychometric tests, of normal Latin American school children.

The system of American and European education is, consciously or unconsciously, scaled to the end of giving the child sufficient interest in things above the physical to keep him from being swept away by the tremendous forces that are loosed upon him with the dawn of adolescence. Under these systems, approximately seven years of actual primary school education are thus

[1] Wallace Thompson, *The Mexican Mind,* Little, Brown & Co., Boston, 1922, pp. 288 ff.

passed, in the temperate zone by Anglo-Saxon children. If, then, the Latin American child in the tropics reaches adolescence (as is generally believed) about two years previous to the Anglo-Saxon child of the temperate zone, he has but five years of his imported seven-year plan of education behind him when he reaches the confusions and difficulties of adolescence, and is thus handicapped immeasurably, in a climatic environment that is itself his enemy.

Any broad plan for Central American education would therefore seem to have to be based on a thorough physical survey and on a parallel study of the intellectual capacities of children at different ages and under different educational and environmental conditions. Upon such information could be determined as a mere groundwork for educational success either the beginning of education in the tropics at the age of five, or a compression of the courses of primary education into five years instead of seven.

Nor should such a survey stop with the determination of these points, fundamental though they are. A plan of teaching could then be evolved without over-emphasis either on the standards of foreign education, as is now done, or on the local ideas of the native pedagogues, which is the Scylla to the Charybdis of the blind following of North American and European educational methods. The whole problem is one of thrilling possibilities, for in Central America there seems a finer and more intensive field for educational work of constructive value than in almost any other section of the tropical world, a laboratory ready-made for the study.

The road for the survey needed has been blazed by workers in related fields. One of these, Dr. Thomas Jesse Jones of New York, has devoted many years to the problem of educational adaptations, that is, the fitting of education to the needs and opportunities, environments and capacities of peoples. His invaluable contributions on this subject have only recently been gathered into a general book,[2] his principles being briefly the adaptation of education to the community relationship in four major and four minor phases: "Health," "Use of Environment," "Preparation for Home Life," "Use of Leisure Time," as the primary factors, and "Languages" to be used in teaching (this applies to the choice of Indian tongues or Spanish in Guatemala, for instance) "Conventional Subjects of the Curricula," "Character Development" and "Religious Life."

Only bare beginnings of education of this sort have been made in Central America—in the field of health. This education has been partially begun by the International Health Board of New York, which has been teaching some of the principles of hygiene which it believes tend to the eradication of the omnipresent intestinal troubles of Central America, as of the tropics in general.

[2] *Four Essentials of Education,* Scribner's, New York, 1926. The subject is set forth cogently, with interesting examples of application, in his reports, *Education in Africa,* Phelps-Stokes Fund, New York, 1922, and *Education in East Africa,* New York, 1925. This reference to the study of aboriginal Negro education should not be misunderstood. Dr. Jones' principles are adapted to every phase of education, perhaps more to the needed changes in education in his own country than anywhere else!

The other phases of educational adaptation to Central American conditions, like the "Use of Environment," bring in the need of scientific research into the local facilities and the methods for intensifying such teaching as agriculture, for instance, in the countries of Central America. Based upon that research would then come the establishment of broad educational plans in farming, along lines adapted to the people, whose capacities and needs other surveys will have determined. This whole subject of environmental adaptations is actually more hopeful than almost anything else in the Central American horizon. The very teaching of the use of the hands and of trades could, when such a survey has done its work, be planned with wise knowledge of native materials and customs, and of the creation of things of use and not of mere trinkets unrelated to Central American life or Central American needs.

There is no space in a book of this type to go deeply into this subject—indeed, it cannot be gone into until the survey is made, or at least begun. It is not worth the while of any of us to speculate on factors of this education, for speculation and unripe conclusions have done harm enough, if only in making the most optimistic of us doubt, sometimes, the efficacy of conventional education anyway!

Yet the study that trained—and devoted—men and women of whatever nationality could do in Central America would repay a thousand times the money and the thought that would be required. Their field is unlimited—here I have only suggested the most obvious phases of the individual education. There is yet the

whole horizon of education in the community, the type of community school, urban, or rural, whether detached from or organized as part of the life of the community —questions that can be answered, and would be, by such a survey as this.

Perhaps all this seems fantastic, seems an impossible complication of a problem that needs above all things simplicity—and money. But it offers an opportunity, not merely for Central American governments, but for those philanthropists of other lands who believe in world education and in international good-will. No greater element of friendship has ever been offered to Central America than the work which the International Health Board of the Rockefeller philanthropic group has been doing in all five of the countries for many years. Everywhere the Rockefeller stations and the capable young American doctors who have been in charge have been proving to Latin America that not all the United States is on money bent and that there is idealism to be found even in the pocketbooks themselves of these practical-minded North Americans.

A similar devotion of great wealth to the service of education might well be made in relatively small sums in the surveys which I have here suggested. Central America offers, as I say, a laboratory ready-made, circumscribed, virtually unaffected (for a few years longer) by the currents of the world outside. Here might well be worked out the basis of the new education and even the basis of the aid to be given that education, in all Latin America, in all lands where the problem is the training of tropical populations.

CHAPTER XV

THE WAYS OF THOUGHT

As Central America is dragged, all unwillingly, into the rather disturbing glare of modern civilization, it is likely to appear at something of a disadvantage,—psychologically, at least. Yet the virtues we have found are themselves the cause for the world's sometimes cold judgment,—they have made us forget that Central America is still of the tropics, with all of the tropics' traditional languor, indifference and procrastination. And, too, with a philosophy and standards of its own, somewhat apart from the world's standards but quite satisfactory to the masses of its people. Indeed, the wonder is not that Central America has not gone farther in the face of an apathetic world, nor that it does not move more rapidly today; the wonder is that it has chosen to go and has gone as far as it has in the ways of European civilization, and that it is so wonderfully, so keenly, awake and willing to accept what we have to give, and to adapt and to use it.

Not, Heaven help us, that Central America has not had its eye on foreign customs and foreign manners these many years! It has that, but it has also kept foreign things very much at a distance and judged them very much by its own standards, not itself by theirs. As

we travel through Central America, we quickly come to the realization that foreigners, and particularly those from the United States, come in for a decidedly disproportionate amount of attention. There happens to be a sound reason for this, and for the attitude which goes with it. The peoples of Central America have so long been taught, to their cost, that their own governments originate and control policies that they find it hard to believe, even when they know better, that the government of the United States, so much more powerful, can possibly leave its private citizens to go their own way abroad.

Americans and Britons are cheerily lumped in one class as "gringos" throughout most of Latin America, and they carry, individually, the full weight of all the past and present policies of the Washington government. From the most dignified banker to the humblest traveling salesman, they are calmly studied by the natives with a view to determining, first if they have an official mission, and, if not, whether they are not personages traveling incognito for the purpose of securing information or influencing local affairs.

Nor is this due to mere sensitiveness or to any imagined sense of inferiority or even to suspicion that the foreigner considers himself superior. Make no mistake about that. The Central American is happily free from that unfortunate mental complex. He errs, if anything, on the other side. I quote only one of their own people:

"The Central American will never admit that he may be wrong or that he has limitations. An engineer will

gladly design you a battleship or a lawyer will lay out a road or a telephone system or will plan an entire new method of agriculture with complete assurance. They scorn the North American customs of specialization as both unnecessary and a bore, and in their colleges they teach a dozen subjects at one time with amused tolerance of the narrow pedagogue from abroad who thinks that five topics are enough for a student to absorb in one semester."

No, Central American thought is an entity, and there is no advantage ever gained by the high-and-mighty effort of the Anglo-Saxon to "make it easy for them" to accept his ways of thought. His ways of thought are of not the slightest interest to the Latin American, excepting as they may be adapted to helping him solve his own national problems. This is as it should be. There is enough to give (and to receive) in Central America to occupy our time fully. The Central Americans want—eagerly they want—what we can give, but only as it is or can be adapted to their needs and to the lives they are living today. But they wisely want no new standards of life, for they know, even if we do not, that too many of their troubles today come from ill-considered borrowings from other peoples and other systems.

Which does not, necessarily, make it any easier for the all too common type of foreigner who still thinks he is a soul of finer strain come down to give Central America a "lift." Nor for the even more unfortunate outsider who overtactfully seeks to avoid offending the "sensitive Latin soul" by carefully concealing the

superiority that he fondly believes the Latin American recognizes as emanating like a halo from around his blond head!

All of it turns upon the difference of viewpoint—and differences of viewpoint easily become the most important elements in Central American contacts, a real tragedy to the unwary. Many of the greatest difficulties between the foreigners and the natives, even in so important and logically impersonal matters as banking, have been due to Central America's inexorable emphasis on this difference in approach. Neither side is to blame, and yet it seems often as if the native, as well as the foreigner, could with profit adapt himself to the exigencies of a momentary situation.

When a foreign banker in perfect good faith sends his representatives to a Central American capital to discuss a loan, the opposition of a noisy bloc of legislative insurgents should not necessarily seem, one must admit, to offer a serious difficulty to negotiations. But the respectable banker whose word is as good as his bond in all the money markets of America and Europe seldom relishes being called a thief and a blackguard, even if violence and invective are the custom of political debate in Central America! Yet just this is one of the oldest stories in certain categories of Latin American finance. The British bankers met it long ago, as more recently the North Americans have "discovered" it. Once, indeed, the British were delighted when Latin Americans greeted their investment as "the noble English people sending their wealth as missionaries all over the world" until they found that this welcome was likely to change,

five years later on (interest being pressed), and their erstwhile friends be found referring to them bitterly as "a nation of shopkeepers." The foreigner can well devote himself to finding a sympathetic rather than a patronizing relationship.

The sense of separateness from the foreigner which the Central American aristocrat still retains gives him much of his power and influence with the lower classes of his own people, in whom that separateness from the foreigner is ingrained. In even so non-material a relationship as religion the Central American's feeling is distinctly clannish, and it is amusing to discover that in Guatemala all who are not Roman Catholics, be they Jews or Protestant converts, Englishmen or Frenchmen or Negroes, are classed in one group of "outsiders," calmly denominated "*judíos*," or Jews! This is of course a relic of the old Spanish religious hatred of the Jew as typical of the anti-Catholic, but it is soundly Central American today.

The Roman Catholic Church has in this way, as in so much else, come to symbolize the conservatism and the substantiality of the supporters of "things as they are" in Central America. In Nicaragua the Conservative party is thoroughly religious and supports the Church both officially and financially. In Guatemala, by contrast, the Liberals were anti-clerical, and the Archbishop of Guatemala was for a time in exile—living in seclusion in the beautiful Jesuit College of Central America at Granada, in Nicaragua. Clerical newspapers are from time to time suppressed in all the countries, and the Liberals even whisper that anti-

government propaganda handbills have actually been printed in the dead of a wicked night in the Archepiscopal palace. There are those in every country of Central America who will trace quite all the problems of politics, even to the Central American Union itself, to the machinations of Jesuits on the one side or to the counter-conspiracies of heathenish "*judíos*" on the other.

Religion is far from being all politics in Central America, however. Neither, indeed, is it all orthodox theology. The partially civilized Indians of Guatemala, while often really idolaters and sun-worshippers, yet make obeisance to the Saints of Holy Church, quite content in the sun halo which surrounds the heads of the images! The story is told by a famous Guatemalan judge that early in his career he was once confused and baffled by the solemnly sworn testimony of twenty different Indians that each had, himself and alone, committed a certain murder. The Gordian knot was cut only when an experienced official of his court administered the oath, making the witnesses swear by the great Sun itself, instead of by the Holy Bible or the Saints. Then all the Indians came forward calmly and simply to tell the truth.

In many of the Indian villages they keep, secretly, modern or ancient idols, and fantastic ceremonies are carried on under the cloak of more conventional Christian worship. In the village of Santiago Atitlán, on the shores of the beautiful lake in the summit of the Guatemalan cordillera, the Indians have ceremonies during Holy Week which, while inextricably mixed with the elaborate services of the Church during this great sea-

son, are little less than idolatry, and indeed have a definite image as the object of their adoration. This image has never been seen by a white man, for it is jealously guarded by an honored Indian whose title and whose duty it is to be its keeper. This idol is a head of silver, upon a wooden body. Its name is "Machimón," and it is said to be none else than Judas the Betrayer, himself!

Only during each annual Holy Week is Machimón to be seen by his devotees, and for this occasion he is prepared and dressed by a special functionary whose name, translated from the Indian, means "He Who Dresses Machimón." No one can vouch for the complete accuracy of the details, but it is said that part of the duties of "He Who Dresses Machimón" is to wash the clothes of the doll in Reuter's soap and to distribute the good German soap suds thus sanctified to the virgins of the village, who thereupon wash their own raiment in its sacred waters. It appears that it is quite necessary to have Reuter's soap and none other will serve.

Machimón is only one of many tribal deities, for the more isolated a village in Guatemala, the more likely it is to have its own little gods, and to worship them with strange ceremonies. Indeed, wherever one goes into churches in Guatemala, one finds Indians, kneeling with their candles, but, apparently, going through private rituals. They are found in remote corners of the edifice, far from altars, and their ceremonies are apparently only dimly associated with the sanctity of the place to which they have come.

We watch these silent, fumbling figures as if they

were actors in a dream, romantic, picturesque, but inexpressibly distant from us. They seem to be groping so pitifully for something beyond their reach; to be seeking thoughts they can never think, scratching at deeds they can never do.

So much for a mere rustling of the curtain that hangs between us and the fascinating intricacies of the native Central American psychology. Years will bring the foreigner increased knowledge, but I always wonder whether they bring greater wisdom. The first glimpse, the first clear-cut pictures—Machimón in his clothes washed in Reuter's soap, or the astonished foreign banker collapsed in the big hammock in his breeze-swept hotel room, after his encounter with his smiling hosts,—tales like these throw light no solemn knowledge or dull familiarity will ever give.

The story is told of an occasion when James G. Blaine, then Secretary of State of the United States, was appealed to to help in salvaging a threatening situation in Central America. He could get no definite, concrete information in response to the questions he asked out of his desire to help. Finally he exclaimed:

"Why don't they stick to facts? They never tell you exactly what they want nor why they want it. If it is 10:30 o'clock and you ask them what time it is, they say, 'It is not yet 12!' "

The Central American diplomat who was present at this incident explained it—adding another note to the confusion:

"The reason they do not say what they want is that they want such ridiculous and impossible things that

they are ashamed to say so. They therefore try to work everything around to get what they want without saying they want it."

The things that seem ridiculous and impossible to the Central American are, however, often the very things that he sees happening every day in the countries like the United States and England. They seem impossible and far away from his present opportunity, and so, instead of seeing the great goal, he confines his attention to the details of the road. His subterfuges for finding his way along that highway are "ridiculous and impossible" indeed.

The "theorizer," the "dreamer," we say, of course. And yet how little the kindest of us realize the weight of limitation and isolation these "dreamers" have lifted on their shoulders, through four centuries. And now the wonder is, as I have said, not that Central Americans are more theorizers and less doers than the peoples of other lands, but that in their tropical isolation they are so essentially, in temperament, doers and actors upon the convictions that they attain.

In the past there have been lack of opportunities and limitation of viewpoint that all too naturally drive the Central Americans to theories. But when a Central American theorizes, his best way of testing the soundness of his conclusions is to try the conclusion in action and then see what happens! It is like the child who strikes you to discover whether you are his friend, quite sure that if you are his friend you will not strike back! The code is distinctive and individual, but it is based on racial traits deeply ingrained.

The Anglo-Saxon type of mind is, the Central Americans say, naturally credulous, but the Latin, and particularly the Central American, is naturally incredulous and sceptical. We sometimes hear a Central American express the conviction that one who has made money has done so dishonestly and that one (especially if it is himself) who loses money has been cheated. Yet probably his firm declaration that a man who has made money is a knave is more than half by way of discovering whether or not he *is* a knave!

As sound a reason as any for the failure of the Anglo-Saxon to understand Latin American psychology completely is to be found just here. Naturally, the Anglo-Saxon believes what the Latin American says, even at the moment when the Latin may not believe it himself. And the paradox is that the Latin Americans expect the Anglo-Saxon to believe them, and if he discounts one of their statements, it is not at all nice of him, because *his* code is to believe and to accept. But they themselves discount everything they hear—and the foreigner seldom knows it!

All this eternal questioning and doubting tends, however, to the development of minds keen and delightfully active every moment of their lives. The alertness of the Central American has no relationship whatever to the supposedly easy and lethargic climate in which he lives. No one who is wise does business in Central America on any theory that a Central American is going to miss a single trick in the game.

One cannot remark too often the quickness of the mentality of the natives of almost every class. It is this

mental alertness that has resulted in the development in Central America of the keenest sort of politicians. No one who has struggled with political problems and recalcitrant constituencies anywhere can fail to have an admiration for this Central American genius. When this genius is directed toward the broader phases of international relationships, it is developed into a vision that not only sees the immediate present with much clarity, but often has a surprising grasp of the future. Perhaps they do not always see justly, or entirely accurately, but with the information at hand, at least, their political psychology is amongst their soundest and most dependable characteristics.

CHAPTER XVI

POLITICS AND REVOLUTIONS

Central America has a distinctive political creed and a set of very definite political ideals, common to all the five countries. Central Americans believe intensely and sincerely in political independence, and, strangely enough, they are willing equally to grant it to others as to take it for themselves. They believe theoretically and practically in a centralized government; this is a survival of the monarchical system under which they lived through the Spanish era. Finally, they believe in the rule of the majority for, contrary to common opinion, there is little supine acceptance of political usurpation in Central America.

This or that leader may seek to achieve the majority for his support by fantastic means,—and some take advantage of the conditions of the countries to impose temporary dictatorships without that majority backing, but belief in majority rule, as the fundamental of democracy, is well grounded. The revolutions and political difficulties, which it is the custom to ascribe to the unwillingness of the Central American to accept defeat graciously, are more often due either to the belief that the majority has not been allowed to express

its will, or to unfair and unthinking oppression—which amounts to the same thing. Oppression has always alienated, not attracted, the majority, no matter in what land or upon what race it is inflicted.

It is just this that tends to make Central American politics a politics of revolution. The goal of full democracy is still so far in the distance that elections are not yet effective, and revolution has been the only alternative to elections. The menace against bad government in Central America is revolution, just as in the United States and Great Britain the menace that looms before bad government is the coming election.

Election systems are, the world around, the root of political progress as well of political abuses. In Central America the methods of ascertaining the "popular will" give a striking picture of those political difficulties which are all too common in their national affairs.

There is nothing so fantastic as the tales that are told of some of the Central American elections. In Nicaragua it used to be said that the system of voting was to have two entrances to the polls, one for those who intended to vote the Conservative ticket, the other for those who intended to vote for the Liberals. One of these parties (in recent years it was the Conservatives just as in other times it was the Liberals) controlled the government and thus the election machinery throughout the country. In political strongholds of Liberalism the Liberals naturally greatly outnumbered the Conservatives and their queue of voters was much the longer. It is said that the Conservative election judges were not perturbed, but proceeded to take the vote by calling for

alternate Conservative and Liberal voters to enter and cast their ballots, and when, in the middle of the day, they exhausted the supply of Conservative voters, the polls were promptly closed! Effective and efficient, undoubtedly, and one can even understand the practical sense that felt it unnecessary to overwork the polling clerks to record an unnecessary majority, particularly of the opposition!

Nicaragua was not the only offender in election systems, however. In Salvador, ancient election laws provided that there should be one voting place for each municipality. Thus the entire population of the city of San Salvador, about 80,000, must vote at one booth. Needless to say, the problem of elections in San Salvador was very simple; the party that had control of the booth won the election. In Honduras it is the recognized duty of the government to see that its chosen candidate is properly put through without undue opposition, and the election difficulties in 1923 out of which grew the 1924 revolution were blamed by local observers on the failure of the government to make up its mind as to just whom it wanted to become president. In Guatemala the Indian seldom voted alone, for each *hacendado* sent in his workmen, with their foreman at the head of the rank, to cast the vote in the way their *patrón* deemed wisest.

Costa Rica alone seems to have been comparatively free from such quaint election methods. Yet even there the control of the leading families is virtually absolute, through the clan relationship which cuts across all class divisions.

One wise Central American politician (now in retire-

ment) summed up much of the significance of this politics when he said:

"There is more liberty here in Central America than anywhere else in the world. There is no prohibition on drinking. There are no taxes, so that you get all you earn. The press is free. The only crime you can commit is to think differently from the government."

It is this situation that brings every sincere student face to face with the crux of that problem with which Central America struggles. Revolutions are the expression of "thinking differently from the government," because there is as yet little chance to express that different thinking at the polls. The middle road that will have to be found in Central American politics is the road between revolutions that achieve no final solution and elections that do not work. In true democracies there is always the menace of the next election, and dishonest régimes both fear and are ultimately punished at the polls. But, ask the Central Americans when we voice criticisms of their revolutions, what of countries where elections are never fair, and where the decision of an intelligent electorate is impossible to obtain, first because there is a relatively low level of education (which is the gateway through which native intelligence alone makes contact with life) and second because intimidation and official domination of elections are deep-rooted in history, custom and psychology? What of countries where for three hundred years there was never even the pretense of participation in government by the colonial residents, and where now for over a century political dynasties have never been changed excepting by revolu-

tion, where even if there is no re-election, Presidents still choose their own successors?

Revolution has been the only solution in the past, but throughout all the countries there has begun a sound native movement to travel more deliberately the long road to democracy. Election laws have been revised; if not always with success, at least with sincere striving, which goes far toward preparation for success. Tyranny has become steadily less. Revolution has theoretically been outlawed by treaties and by the policy of such influential foreign powers as the United States of refusing recognition to revolutionary governments. The road is long, here as everywhere in the world, but education is coming, communications are improving, and by the choice of the governments themselves the tendency really is spreading to seek with sincerity the way to peace and orderly transfer of power to legitimate successors.

Back of elections and revolutions, however, lies another phase of Central American political history and psychology which often seems more potent than either in the long development that is ahead; in its promise of a broadening of the political horizon it seems also a fairer insurance of internal peace and progress.

This is the union of the five countries into that "Federation of Central American States" which has been the battle-cry of the idealists of the whole Isthmus for close to a hundred years. This Union has been mentioned above, especially in connection with the political situation in Honduras. Not only in Honduras—where it is most openly discussed and supported—but through-

out all the five countries, it has been the most important and most frequent goal of local wars and revolutions.

We may wander innocently into Central American affairs, seeking only a superficial understanding, but we shall early come upon this strange and disturbing international dream. We may wonder why five countries should want to unite, or we may find ourselves wondering only why so merely idealistic a plan as the Union should have had so hectic and bloody a history.

The fact of the matter is that the Union, whether it has in appearance been supported or decried, has never, in the whole history of Central America, had its importance in its merits alone. Either it has been used as a cloak for the ambitions of a strong man for domination of his own and neighboring countries or it has been emasculated and compromised by the intense desires of its proponents to see it realized by fair means or foul. The Union seems deeply ingrained in the hearts of the influential Central American idealists, and in the practical needs of the five countries, and probably, except for these extraneous trimmings, might long since have been consummated, and its consummation permanent.

Central Americans, however, will not all agree with this conclusion when the interested foreigner has reached it. Some of those who profess the greatest desire for the Union see its difficulties clearest. As the President of one of the countries put it:

"We are five parts of one country tending always to disunion, in contrast to the thirteen original states of the United States, which were separate entities, tending toward union."

It is true that during the Spanish rule all of Central America was one country, governed from Guatemala City as the Captain-Generalcy of Guatemala, the present five countries being merely provinces. Central America remained united for a short time after the Independence of 1821, but soon it separated into the five countries of the present. Every conceivable sort of effort to bring about a new Union has since been made. Several times it has been accomplished—on paper—and time and again great leaders have fought and died for it. Even the United States have been brought into the question, and one militant Unionist who was at the same time strongly anti-American once declaimed to me passionately that he would oppose with his life any interference of the United States in Central American affairs—excepting their interference to impose the Union!

So we set it down, and try to cut clear the briers of the details of politics in these lively lands. From elections that do not function to a Union that is so dim and yet so high an ideal, seems a long leap. But that is Central America, the deepest chicanery, if you will call it so, and the highest idealism, in the same lands and in the same politics.

Before we turn away, however, there is one other element working on Central American affairs that cannot be overlooked. In the past much of the burden of the very progress of Central America toward democracy and of Central American failure to achieve the goal quickly has been laid upon the Department of State in Washington. Between accusations of imperialism and of predatory designs upon these rich countries on the

one hand and equally fervid accusations of a lack of policy that is supposed to be responsible for Central America's sometimes uncertain progress, lies a whole gamut of alleged interferences and neglects. Some reference has been made to these assertions in preceding pages, and in recent years the United States have undoubtedly been evolving a very definite policy which if not now crystallized and proven, is at least well on the way to becoming a stable factor in Central American affairs. The present policy of the American Department of State has been expressed as follows:

"The encouragement of independent, orderly constitutional government, enabling these countries to stand as equals amongst the nations of the earth, enjoying political peace and economic prosperity."

The method of achieving this excellent ideal has included and apparently still includes the enforcement of a policy of holding the recognition of the United States as something given a government in Central America only if it has come to power without stain, political or moral. The United States gave formal notice, in 1923, of their acceptance of the standards for recognition set by the five Central American countries, in their own treaty of Peace and Amity of that year. These standards of legitimacy of government were that it should not have risen to power by revolution and that the chief of state elected after a revolution should not be the revolutionary leader or a relative, and that the determination of the constitutionality of any other President should depend alone on the judgment of the recognizing country, in this case of the United States.

The criterion has not been uniformly successful in keeping the United States out of difficulties in Central America, for as I have pointed out above, fair elections are rather difficult to hold, governments have a way of dictating their successors, and the only really effective method of completely changing a whole régime seems by revolution. But the plan of making recognition a sort of accolade has been fairly successful in that it has enabled the United States to withdraw their Marines from Nicaragua and to keep from putting them into Honduras—if not always guaranteeing that troops will not have to be returned to protect American lives and property.

The question of landing troops to protect American and foreign rights has been decided many times by the American Department of State as a positive right and duty. As one American official expressed it to me:

"We could of course decide today that we should never land soldiers again in Central America, but a crisis involving death for foreigners, or the landing of troops by a non-American power to protect its nationals would quickly change any such policy no matter how sincerely we attempted to follow it."

American imperialism in Central America is a subject of long discussion and many phases. Suffice for the record here that there has been a consistent drift away from the appearance of imperialism since the climax was touched about 1903, after the Panamá revolution. The records of the Department of State, at any rate, show no spoils or visible recompense of those years of uniformly costly friendship excepting, as the author-

ities involved might phrase it, "the return that comes from having happier, more peaceful and more prosperous neighbors around us."

The policy as developed regarding property now is to land American marines if necessary to protect property in time of strife, but to refuse always to consider making such intervention in Central America if its only object is to protect profits of individual business men or companies, to enforce contractural obligations, or to collect private loans floated for those countries,—with the possible exception of government loans which were made at the instigation of the United States for the purpose of making financial reforms and to restore economic stability to the country concerned.

The relation of the United States to the governments of Central America is rather firmly based on the understanding—not always clearly accepted there—that while the United States Department of State encourages, and uses its influence to maintain, orderly constitutional government in Central America, it considers itself under no obligation to maintain such government by force or to return the constitutional authorities to power if they are overthrown by revolution. The attitude in this question is based primarily on the experience of 1912 in Nicaragua, when Marines were sent in to support an imperiled Conservative government—and remained for thirteen years because there was no time when the government there was willing to have them leave. This policy is also based, however, on the general tenet that the moral influence of the United States is always for law and order, but that no lasting gain would result

and no real lesson would be learned if the United States compelled the Central American countries by force to conform to their own constitutions.

The policy of Washington may thus be described as having as its aim to teach these countries to stand alone, so the United States insist that they shall solve their problems of government themselves, confining official American aid to matters of finance and economics where advice can be given that cannot be obtained locally and is not political. The ideal, at least, of Washington is to keep the centre of Central American politics in Central America, not in Washington, and to insist that the political responsibility rests on the people of each country. It is an ideal not yet fully realized.

The United States are still friend, teacher, policeman in one, to Central America, a position that has been given them both by the choice of Central America and its need for such a friend, and by the imperious geography and strategy of the Caribbean and of the Panamá canal. For good or evil, then, it is there, and if in the past there has been ground for severe criticism, still in the future there is perhaps better ground for great hope. Crisis after crisis has beaten against the policy of holding recognition as the reward for the good behavior of new governments and, on the opposite side, criticism and accusations of neglect have been launched against Washington's policy of moral rather than material might. But, for good or ill, American policy is an integral part of the history of Central America of the past and of today. As we cast the balance up, its good outweighs its evil, as throughout every page of the

picture this book has unrolled, and the good that thus prevails in Washington's intents and policies contributes mightily to all Central American progress.

It is, indeed, one of the beams of the rainbow of hope that lifts Central America's gaze, and ours, upward instead of downward. For that rainbow does swing across the skies, an arc of promise that stretches from the North to the Equator, from Washington to Panamá —and takes the fairest colors of its hope for peace and prosperity on the Caribbean from the five hues of brilliant promise that are reflected in the Rainbow Countries of Central America.

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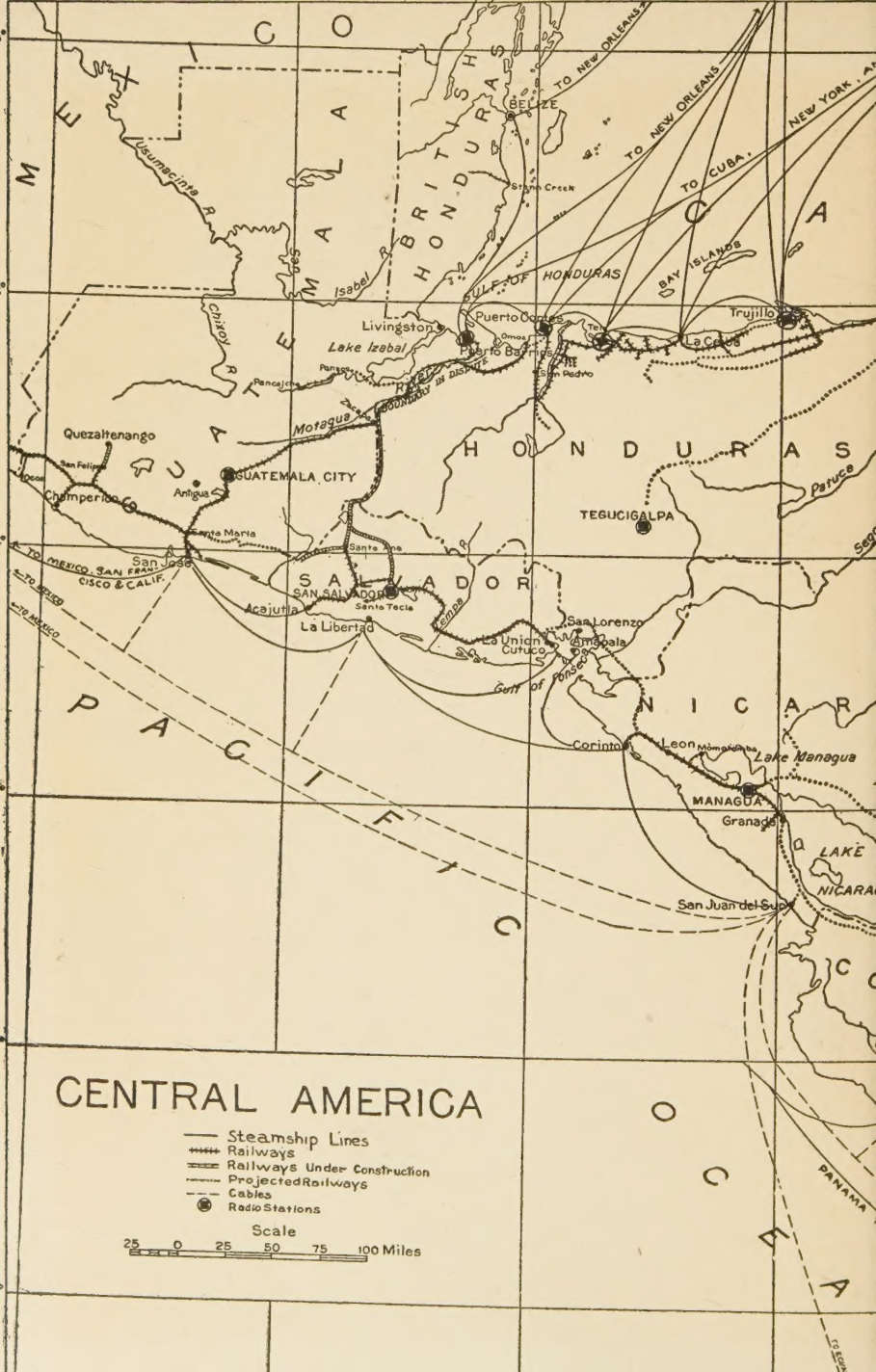
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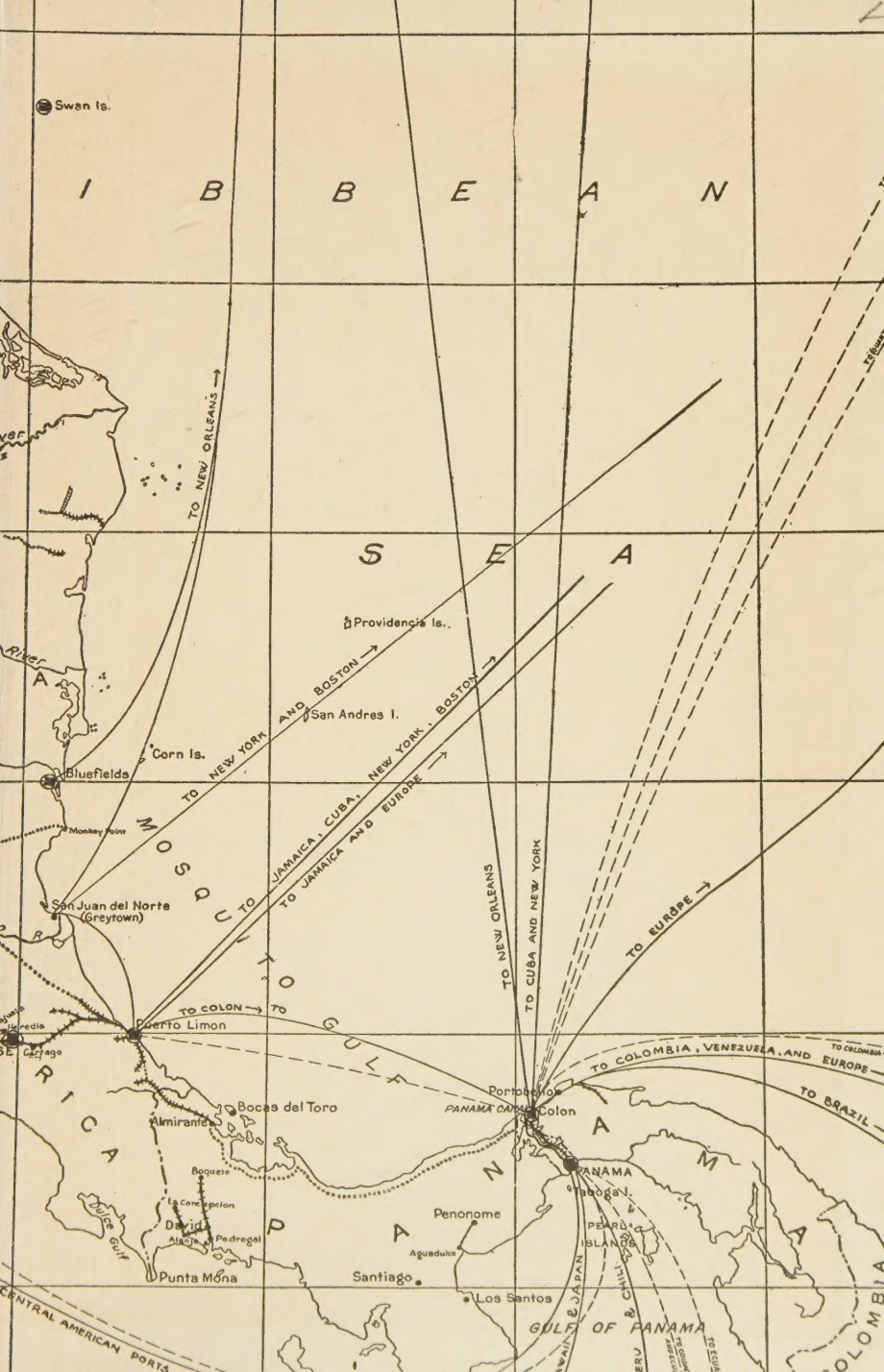
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